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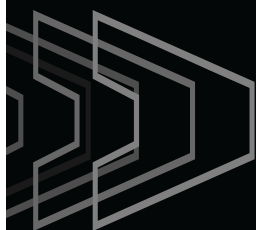
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One Last Mallory Alert!

'Love Poet' Lee Mallory retires, and OC will never be the same
BY VICTOR INFANTE

We won't have Lee Mallory to kick around anymore.

To be fair, Mallory—a veteran professor of English as a second language at Santa Ana College and a mainstay on the Orange County poetry scene since the '80s—never made a very plausible villain. Sure, he came up for some good-natured ribbing in the pages of *OC Weekly*: Jim Washburn deemed him one of OC's scariest people; I dubbed him "The Poet Laureate of OC's Middle Class"; Commie Girl columnist Rebecca Schoenopf recounted his weird, faux-gestapo behavior one night at Club Mesa; former editor Will Swaim (allegedly) hid under his desk to avoid taking a call from him.

Now, Mallory is retired—his classes have ended, his readings shuttered. Some of his papers, including work by nearly every OC-based poet, have been boxed and sent to his alma mater UC Santa Barbara for a special "Lee Mallory Collection," which is part of that school's study of the legendary poet Charles Bukowski, of whom Mallory was an acquaintance. Other work by Mallory is being preserved at the Santa Ana College Nealley Library.

Meanwhile, as with Bukowski, the man himself is gone—not dead, though, just moved to Las Vegas, although he will be back for a "retirement reading" on May 7 at the Gypsy Den in Santa Ana, to be hosted by fellow poet Jaimes Palacio.

But underneath the jibes and the annoyance with his, ahem, *insistent* promotion efforts were three steadfast beliefs. First, he could take the heat, whereas a lot of other poets *couldn't*. Second, you could razz him, but his work was too important to *ignore*. Third, Mallory, whatever his faults, has been a force for good in OC. No, really.

While OC was at its most soulless in the late '80s, as the corporate Reagan Youth movement all but obliterated the county's counterculture, Mallory—the author of eight poetry collections—helped to found the Factory Readings in Santa Ana and, later, Poetry At Alta in Newport Beach, readings that long remained part of the county's intellectual fabric.

Mallory teamed up with poet Jana McCarthy, who had been one of his creative writing students, in September 1988 to start the Factory Readings. "Prior to that," recounts Mallory, poets Marcia and Pat Cohee were running a reading in Santa Ana, which stopped when they took the helm of the venerable Laguna Poets reading, which then met at the Laguna Beach Library. "Jana and I filled

in by starting a reading of our own. It got named the Factory Readings because we started it at what was called the Chicago Pizza Factory—now it's the Olde Ship or something, after many incarnations."

Between then and the reading's recent closure (Palacio took the reins under his own brand, but alas, that series will *also* be ending with Mallory's May 7 feature), the reading bounced among several ill-fated venues, including Hennessey's Tavern in Santa Ana, Cook Book Restaurant in Tustin, Casa Palma Rest & Bar in Santa Ana, and oft-controversial Koo's Arts Café, before landing at the Gypsy Den (first in Costa Mesa, and then in Santa Ana).

As others came and went, Mallory remained undeterred, outlasting all of the readings that emerged during the poetry boom of the '90s, save the Two Idiots Peddling Poetry at the Ugly Mug in Orange. This sometimes bewildered younger poets who, on occasion, found his performance style melodramatic, thought his reputation as "The Love Poet" out-of-step with grunge-era cynicism, or bristled at his constant promotion—although, in retrospect, the fabled "Mallory Alerts" that flooded newspaper offices countywide were usually on behalf of some poet Mallory was promoting, rarely the promoter himself.

"Arrogance is how revolutions, even literary ones, succeed," reflects Mallory. "What's worse, or better, a few of us became tireless—even shameless—poetry promoters, myself included, with a fervor akin to zealotry, I admit. But remember—stupid or overdone or arrogant as it may have seemed—I had a mission. Probably still do and will no doubt die that way—not, I hope, fade away like some around us have done, though each has done his part, and some have left us wonderful legacies in print."

Indeed, in addition to his own numerous books and chapbooks, Mallory has served as an editor for the OC-based Moon Tide Press, which published first books by many OC poets, including Two Idiots co-producer Ben Trigg and Mindy Nettifee, who's quickly becoming a national poetry sensation.

Mallory says he wrote his first poem in '68 and studied with acclaimed poet Kenneth Rexroth at UCSB. "In the beginning," he says, "my 'juvenalia' was probably sentimental, drippy and overly romantic, being also influenced as I was by the 19th-century French poets. You see, I longed to travel to France, study Baudelaire and write lyrics in misty Pont Neuf narks like Verlaine."



LEAVING FOR LAS VEGAS

By Mallory's own account, his trajectory changed when he met Bukowski through his brother-in-law, the poet Thomas Kerrigan.

"I was 25, Kerrigan a little older," recounts Mallory. "Buk was about 51. He'd go to his house on DeLongpre, and he wouldn't let you in unless you brought beer. He would feign acting bothered, at first—even suspicious—and termed the young poets who called on him 'sharks.' He put me in a poem with that name, I think, in 'Mockingbird Wish Me Luck' [circa 1972]. A guy in the poem is named Lee, but I'm not 100 percent sure it's me. After a while, we could see that his reticence to welcome us was a pose, the gruff, ol' reprobate, 'king of LA poets,' for, unlike many others, he always let us in. His place was shabby—one bedroom, I think, the kitchen usually a mess, beer cans everywhere. He was, after all, a bachelor."

Mallory admits Bukowski influenced him hugely, "especially when I started to read everything by him I could find. . . . Oddly, [I] was attracted to the futility he saw in life. . . . Bukowski. for me. caught

all that in his poem, 'The Shoelace.'"

Writes Bukowski: "With each broken shoelace/out of one hundred broken shoelaces/one man, one woman, one/thing/enters a/madhouse."

And perhaps it's fair to say Mallory has always been cognizant of the madhouse in which he has been writing and promoting poetry, and he has always treated it as such. How else to explain the years of carnival showmanship, the mad, incomprehensible letters to newspaper editors, the almost Quixotic stewardship of poetry readings in places that almost seemed to reject any infusion of culture?

"What did I learn?" asks Mallory. "Simply what Lawrence Ferlinghetti had said in his 'Populist Manifesto'—that poetry is for the people, not only for some elite group of literati hanging in the idyllic hills of Santa Barbara."

Mallory has lived by that idea, eschewing a solely academic career for sometimes-thankless toil in OC's odd corners. Now he's off to *inevitably* cause his unique brand of chaos elsewhere. And frankly? Orange County's the poorer for it.

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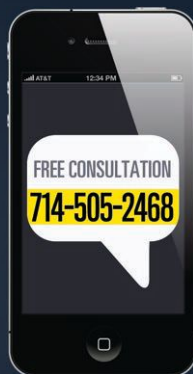
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Gringo de Mayo

Why America's favorite Mexican holiday still sucks

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Gustavo's note: We originally printed the essay below in 2003, which might as well have been in the days of cuneiform in this Internet age of ours. I'm bringing it back because Cinco de Mayo has only become more popular in the decade since, which means we've gotten more pendejo as a nation. Heaven help us all. . . Anyhoo, enjoy your tacos and drinkos this weekend!

Cinco de Mayo is ridiculous. It's not pointless because it serves the nationalist project of promoting pride in a country and its culture. And it isn't worthless, since it has worked like a charm in making Mexicans out of all ethnicities come May 5, even if the extent of commitment toward *México lindo y querido* is drinking Corona instead of Coors.

But celebrating Cinco de Mayo is ridiculous because it commemorates a victory that ultimately meant nothing. Sure, General Ignacio Zaragoza and his troops held off the French that glorious day of May 5, 1862, in Puebla, Mexico, but the triumph was short-lived. When the French and Mexicans fought a year later in Puebla, the French whipped some Mexican *pompí* and ushered in an occupation under the Hapsburg Maximilian.

"The explosive, dramatic, sometimes even suicidal manner in which we strip ourselves, surrender ourselves is evidence that something inhibits and suffocates us."

I write not to diminish the actual event; Zaragoza's impoverished soldiers deserve our admiration for decimating what was then one of the world's best armies. But celebrating Cinco de Mayo is like remembering Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" for the charge while conveniently forgetting the massacre at the end.

Many people regard Cinco de Mayo as a celebration of resistance to imperial power. If only that were so. The events of that day didn't prohibit the French from turning Mexico into their Latin American playground. Mexicans taste the French legacy every morning in their pan dulce and tortas. Teenagers listlessly practice it in *quinceañera* waltzes. Men yelp their approval to our French conquerors whenever the mariachi violins begin their pizzicato coda.

Despite this, many Mexicans in *El Norte* and their *gabacho* pals continue to celebrate Cinco de Mayo. ¿Por qué? The Nobel laureate Octavio Paz had a theory. Examining the Mexican propensity to party, Paz wrote, "The explosive, dramatic, sometimes even suicidal manner in which we strip ourselves, surrender ourselves is evidence that something inhibits and suffocates us. Something



impedes us from being. And since we cannot or dare not confront our own selves, we resort to the fiesta."

There's something there. Strangely, Mexicans enjoy harping over the country's inability to defeat foreign aggressors. Look at the examples: The Mexican government bemoans the Conquest nearly 500 years later, simultaneously outraged that Spaniards slaughtered and raped the inhabitants of Anáhuac and angry that Montezuma acquiesced so quickly to Cortés. The annexation by *los pinche americanos* of half of Mexico 150 years ago because of General Santa Anna's idiocies still makes some Chicanos so miserable they start comparing themselves to Palestinians. (Palestinians! As if someone who speaks horrid Spanish, has parents born in Jalisco that are descended from Europeans, and hasn't lived a day without potable water can logically compare himself to people who have lived in the same parched spot since the time of Christ.) That pretty *pocho* Oscar de la Hoya beat the Mexican hero Julio César Chávez—twice. And let's not talk about the underachieving Mexican soccer squad.

According to Paz, the only way to live with such a bitter legacy is to party. And Cinco de Mayo is Paz's ultimate example of celebrating to forget—even if it promotes a lie.

Mexicanos al grito de guerra: let's confront our perpetual self-pity and stop the Cinco de Mayo celebration. Napoleon III was an egomaniac who, during his lifetime, launched France's imperialist adventures in Indochina and Africa in hopes of emulating his uncle. (For a great portrayal of how loony the Third really was, check out Claude Rains' hammy performance in 1939's *Juarez*.) The Maximilian-Carlota reign in Mexico is best remembered as two royals so desperate for adoration they sailed halfway across the world to find it among peasants. Yet we celebrate the memory of their conquest over us every May 5 by claiming we defeated them. That's ridiculous.

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DEAR MEXICAN:
Although I'm familiar with your column, I don't read it regularly. But today, I was struck by something you said

recently about how Mexicans can make Americans like Mexicans. "We called ourselves Spanish, we considered ourselves white." I'm Mexican, and I consider myself "white" because I'm not black or red or Asian. I understand what I'm made of. People from Spain are Caucasian. But in the U.S., educators don't teach you anything about Spain. They downplay Spain's impact on this country. Test questions in school always emphasized that the Spanish came here for "glory and gold," not to settle this land. So I took 15 trips to Spain over a period of 20 years to explore the country. I've written and researched for years to learn who the Spanish really are. And I am here to tell you that I am proud to have a drop of Spanish blood! Do you know where to find the towns of Laredo, Reynosa and Durango? Not only in Mexico, but also in the Basque Region of Spain! Yes. The *conquistadores* named New Spain areas after towns in Spain! So even if we are one-quarter Spanish, we are members of the white race.

The Anglo-Americans have succeeded in many ways of shaming Mexicans about their heritage and ancestry. But I am very proud of being Mexican. I know who we are, and I know who I am. The blood in my veins is Indian and Spanish; we are Caucasian as well. If we can't call ourselves white, why can others? Why is it that my friends from Iran, Egypt and Albania check off "white" when faced with a U.S. application or legal form? How do these groups end up being "white" and Mexicans don't? Why is it that even a *mulatto* calls himself "white" now? So please don't be so eager to dismiss us as non-white!

Proud Coconut

DEAR BROWNIE: You don't regularly read my column? ¡No manches! I have no problem with Mexicans being proud of their Spanish ances-

try as long as they don't ignore their *nopal en la frente*, just as I don't mind Mexicans being proud of their indigenous blood as long as they don't try to pass themselves off as the pure-blooded heirs of Cuauhtémoc. But news flash, *chula*: Mexicans *no son* white. Nor are Spaniards. "White" is a construct, not a race. And the only legitimate Caucasians come from the Caucasus, ancestral home of the Boston Marathon bombers. (Quick aside for Mexicans: don't the Tsarnaev brothers look like at least one of your cousins, just as Saddam Hussein looks like everyone's *tío*?) Finally, do better research—Laredo and Reynosa are in Cantabria, which is about as Basque as you are white.

DEAR MEXICAN: As a student of history, I believe Mexicans should be more attuned to speaking English. The Spanish did nothing but enslave and subjugate everybody on this continent. Speaking their language only gives them credit they don't deserve. For all the faults of the USA (and there are many, as you know), at least speaking and writing English can open some doors for you here and give you a chance in life. Every immigrant group that ever came over on a boat or crossed the border has had it tough in this country. The ones who couldn't speak fluent English had it tougher. So, as a certified advice columnist, whether or not you're really an *hombre*, you should be advising everyone to at least sign up for the program here. If they don't like what's happening, they can always swear at their boss in Spanish, and he or she will never know the difference. But ask for a big fat raise in English.

White Sox Winner!

DEAR GABACHO: I'm not certified by any organization I'm aware of besides the National Organization for DESMADRE, but I won't pass along your advice to my readers. Repeating your *consejo* to them is akin to me telling Mexicans they should use salsa to spice up their food—they'd laugh me back to Cantabria.

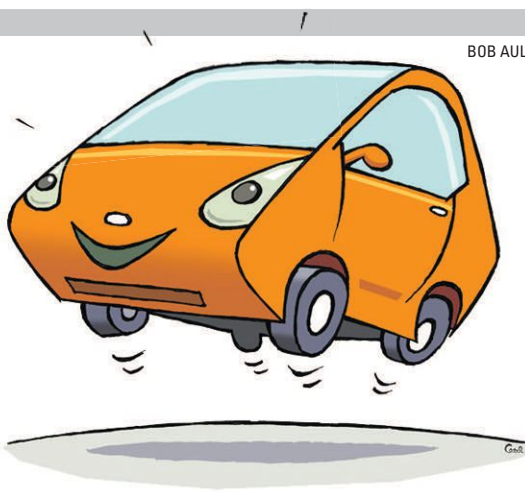
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HeyYou!
» ANONYMOUS

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X PUNCH X 1 PUNK 5

Two decades of
Manic Hispanic,
the greatest cult band
(and Mexicans)
in Orange County history

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO



BACK ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): LUJAN, SOTO, RENFROW; FRONT ROW: TORRES, RIVERA, GABORNO, SCHULTZ

The guitar strap ate into Steve Soto's shoulder as he stood with his hands up, seconds away from a hail of bullets ripping him apart.

It was Cinco de Mayo, 1999, at the Foothill Club in Signal Hill. Soto, the guitar legend whose bands Agent Orange and the Adolescents helped to define OC's punk scene, had just minutes earlier torn through a set with his side project, Manic Hispanic. The group of friends were like him, two-time outcasts in Orange County who grew up as a minority within a minority: punks in a Mexican community, Mexicans in a punk community. Although only 6 years old and a part-time indulgence for everyone involved, Manic Hispanic were already punker's punks, their take on classics—next-to-no change in the musical structures, but with lyrics satirically transformed to reflect their Chicano upbringing, performed while dressed as though on a casting call for *American Me*—delighting audiences across Southern California and beyond.

But no amount of goofball goodwill was going to get Soto and his band mates out of this mess. Right before the show, Foothill staff told Manic Hispanic lead singer Mike "Gabby" Gaborno—most famously of the Cadillac Tramps, exuding *vato loco* style with his buttoned-up Pendleton, mad-dogger sunglasses, wifebeater, fedora, lilting voice, teardrop tattoo and Folsom jeans—to not smoke onstage, as was his custom. Gaborno's

response? He opened up his flannel shirt to reveal a gun tucked into his waistband, scaring the nanny-staters off.

The show went on. The crowd, a mix of whites and Mexicans of all ages, social classes and punk familiarity, moshed to refried hits such as "Barrio Land" (a take on the Clash's "Garage Land") and X's "Los Angeles," now a tale of a Chicana leaving East LA by "crossing the Orange County line," the classic lyric "Every Mexican that gave her lotta shit" reappropriated as a point of pride. When fans weren't slamming into one another, they laughed at the interaction between Gaborno and his *carnales*, full of in-jokes for punks and Mexicans and especially Mexican punks alike. At one point, Foothill staff tried to flag down singer Sonny Lujan, asking if he knew if Gaborno was still packing; Lujan couldn't hear over the roar of the crowd and thought they wanted them to wrap up the gig. "Three more songs!" he pleaded.

And then the lights went out.

The Signal Hill Police Department had cut the power. Outside, a SWAT team readied to raid the place; a Long Beach police helicopter swooped above, its spotlight straight on the Foothill. Someone had called 911 about Gaborno's gun.

The cops stormed the venue and ordered everyone out except Manic Hispanic and

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



✕ PINCHE! ✕ I PUNK'D

» FROM PAGE 11

their crew. The group had stopped mid-song, frozen in their positions. It was fine for a couple of minutes, but the weight of Soto's Telecaster hanging from his body was proving too much as the cops moved from Mexican to Mexican, demanding to know who had the gat.

"No one knew what the cops were talking about," says Soto, laughing at the memory. "I looked at one of the officers, trying to be nice. So I look at him, nod down to my Telecaster, and say as nice as possible, 'Officer, I've got this guitar . . .'"

"If you move," the cop yelled back at Soto, "I'll fucking shoot you."

The police eventually cuffed Manic and their friends and gave them a full pat-down—still no gun. They didn't find Lujan's knife, which he had forgotten to put away after a day working at the docks in Long Beach. And they never found the gun, either: Gaborno had thrown away the water pistol before the show, never telling anyone he had brought one in the first place. This crucial detail didn't emerge until about an hour later, after he

finally realized what the fuss was about and 'fessed up.

The police were disgusted. "I could've shot one of you guys over a toy gun," one spat out in disgust as he left the scene.

Manic Hispanic have howled about the moment ever since.

Even a few days after the raid, the Foothill fiasco had entered local lore: the *Weekly* wrote that people were denying the police raid even happened, that "the show is now destined to be relegated to the bin of embellished nostalgia. If you weren't there, tell all your friends you were" [Rebecca Schoenopf's "Extreme Madness," May 13, 1999]. But more than a decade later, on the eve of their 20th-anniversary show, the remaining members of Manic Hispanic, now all adults with children, mortgages and, well, *adult* lives, laugh at that memory.

"They wanted us to pay the bill for the SWAT, for the cops, for everyone," says bassist Warren Renfrow. "Yeah, right!"

It was, like them, one big comedy of mistaken identity that underscores their status as OC's greatest cult band ever—and our finest Mexicans, period.

If you ask a *loco* (like me) who wants to ascribe political motivation to everything, I'd say Manic Hispanic are one of the most subversive expressions of Mexican identity in American culture. I'd maintain that Manic are the finest *chinga tu madre* to racist Orange County of them all. I'd tie the group to a proud tradition of Mexican musical

tricksters, from El Piporro to El Vez, Tintan to Cheech and Chong, Cantinflas to Culture Clash. I'd describe "The INS Took My Novia Away" (their homage to the Ramones' "The KKK Took My Baby Away") as their attack against the county's anti-Mexican policies and note that their pronunciation of Santa Ana as "SanTana"

✱ "In Mexican culture, you can either go with Cesar Chávez or go with Cheech and Chong," says Lujan. "We went with Cheech."

shows their understanding of regional argot. I'd say that "Brown Man in O.C. Jail," based on the Clash's "White Man (in Hammersmith Palais)," is as searing an indictment of our county's brutal jail system as Moxley's exposés. Why, I would rank Manic Hispanic alongside the Pyramid of the Sun and the Sonora dog among Mexico's crowning achievements, even better than the Mayan calendar.

But ask Manic to place themselves in the pantheon of socio-political musical activism, and they'll ridicule such analysis.

"When other people try to write social commentary about us, like say that 'My Homeboy Is a Joto' [their scabrous take on DI's "Johnny's Got a Problem"] is

a commentary about homophobia in Mexican communities, I just laugh," says rhythm guitarist Maurice Torres. "Everyone tries to be so political and righteous for the cause. It's just a funny song!"

The band are sitting in the well-kept Fountain Valley house of drummer Ruben Rivera. Framed concert posters line the walls, along with "Rivera" written in papel picado, the arabesque paper-cut decorations most frequently seen during Día de los Muertos. Lujan arrives late from his job as a foreman with the International Longshoremen of the World Union; bassist Warren Renfrow and Gaborno aren't around because they're still at work, as a crane operator and concrete inspector, respectively. At one point, Rivera's son comes home from a Little League game, tow-headed and happy.

"In Mexican culture, you can either go with Cesar Chávez or go with Cheech and Chong," says Lujan. "We went with Cheech."

Perhaps they're not as political as people want them to be. But as a reflection of who they are—Mexicans who grew up in Orange County during the 1970s and '80s, who had one foot in the barrio and another in the mosh pit, working-class stiff who made it without selling out who they were—they're the ultimate embodiment of what it means to be brown and down in Orange County, a place where too many still look down on the brown.

"We altered the punk scene," says Gaborno. "We made it more okay for



"When other people try to write social commentary about us, I just laugh," says Torres. "Everyone tries to be so political and righteous for the cause. It's just a funny song."

Mexicans and whites to have an equally good time."

"They were one of the people who taught you it was cool to be Mexican," says Joe Escalante, longtime bassist for the Vandals and a Mexican punk himself. "I always knew it was cool, but they taught other people that."

The band members reflect the rainbow that is the Mexican-American experience. One of Soto's grandparents was from Guanajuato. Singer Efrem Schultz's father was an illegal immigrant; Renfrow's family is Californio; Torres' *familia* comes from Brownsville, Texas; Rivera's parents were of Yaqui and Mexican extraction. Lujan and Gaborno are New Mexicans. Soto, Schultz and Renfrow grew up in and around Fullerton; Rivera and Torres hail from Fountain Valley, Gaborno from Westminster, and Lujan from San Pedro.

And they all exhibit roles that anyone familiar with Mexicans in Southern California will immediately recognize. Rivera and Torres are as even-keeled as Chicanos from Montebello; Renfrow is the kindly uncle, while Lujan—who sports a magnificent salt-and-pepper goatee out of *Lowrider Magazine* pencil drawings and has a gravelly voice that sounds similar to a concrete mixer but is always cracking jokes—is the crazy *tío*, which is also his stage name. Schultz, the youngest mem-

ber of the band, is all smiles and enthusiasm; Soto, the one person who makes his living full-time from music, is all business. And Gaborno, one of the most charismatic front men in OC music history, is the *curandero*, the witch man tasked with saving crowds from becoming PC *pendejos* and reminding them to laugh.

From these varied backgrounds and personalities arose two common threads: They grew up punk, and they grew up Mexican. And they were proud of both because each subset was one and the same to them.

"The punk rockers and the *eses* just hung out together—we were the outcasts," Gaborno remembers of growing up in the 1980s near Westminster's West 13 barrio. "The *eses* in the hood were way cooler than the jocks. Jocks would drive by and call you a punker and a *cholo* in the same breath. But the punkers were more accepting of Mexicans. It was as if they thought, 'You guys are as nuts as us. And it's all right.'"

"Being punks, you were outcasts," Rivera adds. "If you saw another punk, the catchphrase even there was 'Where you from?,' like *cholos*. But being punks with Mexicans—they didn't know what to do with us. One time, I was with some girl, and some *cholo* wanted to get at me because he didn't know who I was. The girl was like, 'No, no, don't ask Ruben where he claims—he's

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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X PINCH! I PUNK

» FROM PAGE 13

from the white part of town!”

“All the Mexican kids are misfits,” says Schultz. “OC’s an uptight place to be a Mexican. Punks in those days were the only ones who understood us.”

The seven became tuned into one another by the early 1990s, weaving in and out of more bands than they can remember (the bigger names include the Adolescents, Agent Orange, Cadillac Tramps, Joyride, Grabbers, Los Infernos). Orange County music was about to break out nationally via Sublime and Social Distortion, and soon-to-be titans such as No Doubt and the Offspring were playing the same gigs as the guys’ bands. As day jobs, Soto and Gaborno worked at the warehouse of Doctor Dream Records, the legendary Orange indie label; to pass the day, they shot the shit about their childhood, cracking up at how their punk and Mexican lives were becoming intertwined. More Mexicans in *la naranja* were starting punk bands; meanwhile, the OC punk and surf scenes had adopted barrio fashion—Dickies and Ben Davis khaki pants, Pendletons and wraparound shades, even lowriders—as their own. To celebrate this *mestizaje*, Soto joked they should do a Freddy Fender cover band.

“Freddy Fender, he’s badass,” says Gaborno of the Tex-Mex legend known for his sweet croon, chubby features and magnificent Mexi-mullet. The man born Baldemar Garza Huerta was a staple of Mexican-American households during the 1970s, including those of Soto and Gaborno. “Him and the Texas Tornados, they were like the MC5. They were originals, doing their own thing.”

But it was all talk until one day, when Soto’s band at the time, Joyride, had to cancel a show at the legendary Linda’s Doll Hut. At the Doctor Dream offices, Renfrow, Soto, Gaborno and Torres—then a roadie for the Cadillac Tramps—dis-

cussed what they should do. Rivera passed by the office. He was Mexican; the band was done. The show was obvious.

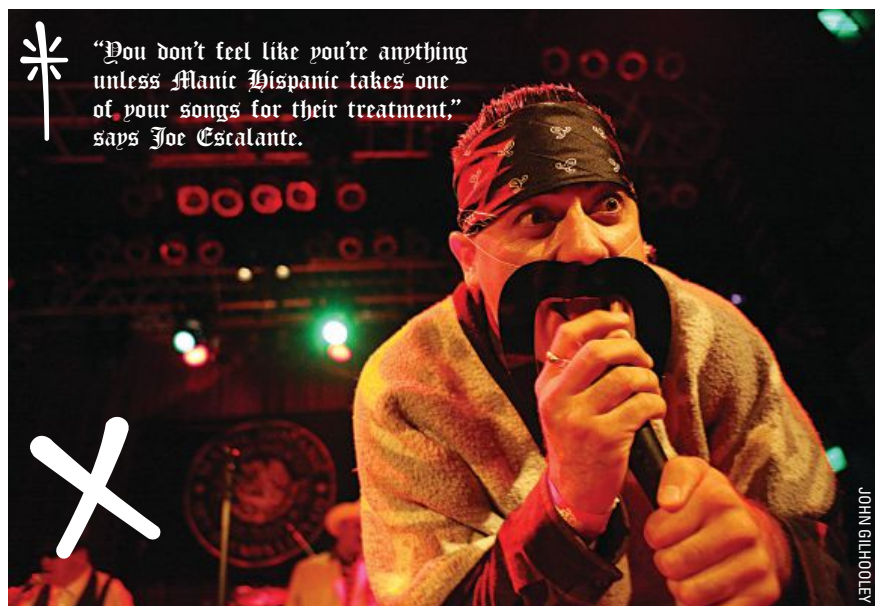
“There was no way we could learn any new songs,” Soto says. “So we just decided to do punk songs we all knew by heart, but Mexicanize them.”

They picked some of their favorite punk classics, decided to dress as *cholos*, named themselves Manic Hispanic after the Manic Panic brand of hair dye, and would let the performance dictate itself. No one from the band can remember that first night, but Doll Hut doyen Linda Jemison recorded it. The tape circulated through the OC scene, and their following show at Cal State Fullerton’s on-campus pub was “packed.” For their third performance, at Club Mesa, they convinced Lujan, road manager for the Tramps, to join them. Lujan had never played in a band. “I kept saying, ‘I can’t do it. I can’t do it. I can’t sing a song,’” he says. “Then someone said, ‘Don’t be a pussy.’ Then it was on!”

After that sold-out show, the group figured they should create personas to only further the merriment. Rivera became Chino “because he smoked so much weed that his eyes were closed,” Lujan says with a laugh. Renfrow picked Oso; Torres transformed into Mo Grease, befitting his rockabilly tendencies. Lujan turned into Tío; Soto, as the whitest member, picked Hoakie; Gaborno—naturally—was El Jefe. They looped in another Mexican punk, Steve Acevedo, and christened him Mad Ralphie because Gaborno thought he resembled Ralph Macchio.

One day, after another band canceled a recording session at Doctor Dream, Soto got Manic Hispanic together to record a demo in a day and a half. That eventually turned into a record. Filled with hilarious asides, furious note-for-note covers, skits, shout-outs and Spanglish, *The Menudo Incident* was the Manic stage show captured. There was even a remake of “Before the Next Teardrop Falls” as a memorial to the original Freddy Fender cover-band idea. The record sold well, and Manic became a fixture on the OC punk scene through the 1990s, playing festivals and dives alike. “Any time they wanted to play, we’d have them,” says Jack Martinez of Black Flys sunglasses. “They were our house band. Cinco de Mayo, backyard, private parties, public

* “You don’t feel like you’re anything unless Manic Hispanic takes one of your songs for their treatment,” says Joe Escalante.



parties—all of it. It's legit punk rock. It can turn into a riot at any given minute. They're like the ultimate OC cult band."

But the band's popularity never extended enough beyond Orange County to warrant full-fledged tours. And the idea that Manic Hispanic could've been more if only they took themselves more seriously stuck to them almost immediately. A *Los Angeles Times* critic in 1994, just a year into their existence, dismissively wrote that Manic Hispanic seemed "far less concerned with incisive satire or parodic musical transformation than with having a good, rowdy, no-brainer time with songs they grew up loving. . . . [They] didn't indicate much thought or effort given to reshaping these oldies into something distinctly new or especially funny."

Manic plead guilty as charged to accusations they could've been bigger. "Aspirations? None," says Torres, scoffing at the very notion of respectability.

"We were all in different bands back then," Soto says more philosophically. "If we had really cracked down and tried to make a run of it, who knows how far we could've gone?"

In December 2009, Soto was touring with the Squirrel Nut Zippers when he received a call: Gaborno had suffered a stroke. Just a couple of days earlier, he underwent open-heart surgery.

"I felt sick to my stomach," Soto says. He let the other members know, and they rushed to Gaborno's bedside to hold vigil.

The 2000s had been good to Manic. They released three more records: *The*

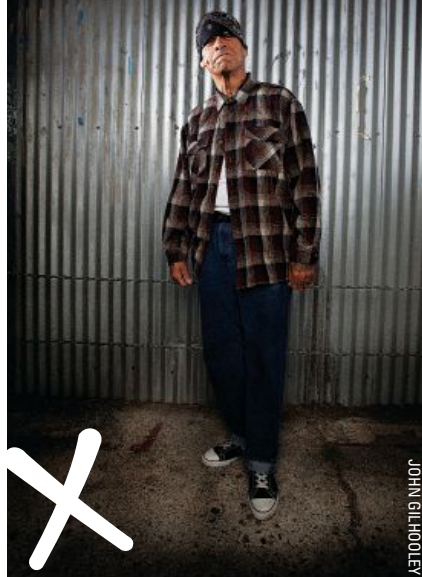
Recline of Mexican Civilization in 2001, the 2003 effort *Mijo Goes to Jr. College*, and 2005's *Grupo Sexo*. Each was a comedy classic and expanded their repertoire to include Green Day ("Welcome to Paramount" instead of "Welcome to Paradise") and Minor Threat—"Out of Step (With the World)" became "Out of Step (With La Raza)". Their Cinco de Mayo shows, alternating between what's now the Observatory (where they'll play this Sunday) and the House of Blues, became as much an annual OC tradition as the swallows returning to Capistrano and perhaps the only place in America where whites and Mexicans could smash into one another and not take it personally. And if they did? Gaborno would stop the shows, get the culprits onstage and make them kiss.

They never changed their supposedly simplistic schtick—and no one minded. In fact, bands began asking members when Manic would record versions of their songs—and flipped out like fanboys when they did.

"I was pretty shocked. I didn't expect it," says Dexter Holland, lead singer for the Offspring and a punk *cholo* in his own right with his sartorial stylings and hawking of his Gringo Bandito hot sauce. For *The Recline*, Manic remade the Offspring's "Come Out and Play (Keep Them Separated)" as "Get Them Immigrated."

Their humor is on the genius level

ANOTHER SHOT OF GABORNO, JUST BECAUSE HE'S SO CHINGÓN



matched only by the Vandals," Holland adds. "Their version of 'Keep Them Separated' was hilarious! It was an acknowledgment, and it was flattering."

"You don't feel like you're anything unless Manic Hispanic takes one of your songs for their treatment," says Joe Escalante of the Vandals. The group turned "Urban Struggle," the Vandals' ode to the fights between punks and cowboys outside Costa Mesa's Cuckoo's Nest during the 1980s, into "I Want to Be a Cholo"

for the closing track of *Mijo*, whose title and cover art are a spoof of the Descendents' *Milo Goes to College*. "They were nice—they asked for permission to [record 'Urban Struggle']," I said, "You do whatever you want. You do your deal—it's an honor."

"Too many Mexican comics—they're funny, but after a while, you run out of jokes about your *abuelita's* *chanclas* or the Virgin of Guadalupe," Escalante adds. "But with music, you don't need a new set every time. And they're making fun of punk culture as well. They're smart and never tiring."

Internally, though, Manic had to deal with what Renfrow charitably describes as, "certain people slipping back into old behaviors that were detrimental." Occasional breakups happened; members came and went. Any ambitions to expand their profile never materialized. But Gaborno's stroke put everything into perspective.

Gaborno's battles with addiction, and subsequent phoenix-like rebounds, are the stuff of Orange County legend. "Gabby's so tough that I didn't think he'd ever die," says Lujan. But the stroke left Gaborno partially paralyzed on his left side and with memory loss. OC's punk community rallied around him; just weeks after the stroke, the House of Blues in Anaheim hosted a fund-raiser featuring all of their bands—Manic, the Adoles-

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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X PINCH! I PUNK!

» FROM PAGE 15

cents, Cadillac Tramps, the Grabbers—as well as other guests. Even Gaborno made a cameo to thank everyone for their support, proudly showing off the fresh scar on his chest.

Through all the ups and downs, Gaborno was the only person to have never missed a Manic Hispanic show. “Without Gabby,” Schultz says plainly, “there is no Manic.” No one thought the band would ever reunite—Gaborno’s recovery was more important than the band. For six months, he gritted through rehabilitation just to relearn simple things, never mind saunter as he did in the days of old. There was no Manic show in 2010, the first time the band ever skipped a holiday. Finally, an offer came for a comeback: Warped Tour at the Pomona Fairgrounds.

“I was a bit leery” of letting him return, Renfrow admits of a friend he’s known since each was 17. “But he told me, ‘Bro, I want to do this. I need to do this.’”

No one knew whether the old Gabby would return. “His banter wasn’t as good,” Torres admits, “but he was on that day. He was ready to play.”

“He was just awesome,” Renfrow says.

“You see it onstage—he belongs there. And if he was rough that first time, I really think it was because we really hadn’t played in a while.”

“I’m really lucky to be vertical,” says Gaborno. He’s now sober and the father of a 3-year-old boy whom he calls “my buddy.” “What I love to do is make people smile and make people laugh. When I realized I still have that ability, that’s what I did. Nowadays, every day that I wake up that I’m on this side of the dirt, I know I’m blessed. And if I can make someone happy, then that’s what I’m going to do.”

“**M**ake him skinnier,” Renfrow bellows at the makeup artist who’s working on Soto outside Alex’s Bar in Long Beach. Soto, who’s sitting down, just smiles as Renfrow cracks up. “Oh, never mind!”

Manic Hispanic are drifting in and out of Alex’s, readying for their Sunday-evening photo shoot. On trucks and chairs are their costumes—flannels, fedoras, *tejanas*, shorts; the Chucks and tight haircuts are part of their day-to-day fashion. After a couple of drinks with their pal, bar owner Alex Hernández (who was at the infamous Foothill show and said of the night, “The police rounded up every fat Mexican they could find, including me”), everyone dresses up to play. Soto is a proto-zooter in black pants, white long-sleeved shirt, black suspenders and mad-dogger sunglasses as dark as the ’56 Chevy they’ll lean on for the shoot. Torres sports a skater hat; Rivera has his Pendleton completely buttoned up; Schultz pulls at his knee-high socks. Renfrow wears a narco-

chic outfit because just as “everyone has a cousin who’s a *cholo*, everyone has an uncle who dresses like this—straight outta the Anaheim Indoor Swap Meet.”

A fan passes by. “You guys don’t dress like that every day?” he asks. The guys just laugh.



FLIER FROM A FOOTHILL SLAMFEST

Everything is back to normal since Gaborno’s stroke—back to the parenting, back to the jobs, back to this sweet release. Manic are writing songs again, preparing to record another album. They have eased into the role of *veteranos* of the OC punk scene. “When we started this band, we were kids,” Rivera says. “Now, I have teens. My daughter is in the front row of the show. There are kids who know only our version and not the originals.”

“Showing up to practices is like salvation for us,” says Soto. “In the early days, we were all in bands. Now, everyone has

families and careers. But maybe that’s why we’ve stuck around for so long and still like one another.”

Cars stop to gape. Actual *cholos* literally rub their eyes in admiration. Gaborno is two hours late (“Gabby has a new drug,” Torres says proudly. “Burritos”), prompting the photographer to wonder if maybe they should reschedule. “Two union guys, taking the day off for a photo shoot?” Lujan snaps. “NAH!”

Finally, Gaborno shows up, as impish as ever. He was at Leisure World Seal Beach, listening to a roots band, and forgot about the shoot. Now, everyone leans like a *cholo*, glowers like punks. And then, just five minutes into it, with no prompting whatsoever, they all hum in unison “El Jarabe Tapatio,” the legendary Mexican song better known stateside as “The Mexican Hat Dance.” Simple, effortless, natural. Mexican. American. Orange County to the core, ese.

“I would like to give you some righteous explanation of what we mean, but ultimately, it’s so much fun,” says Gaborno, trying to explain Manic’s ultimate legacy.

Renfrow is more prosaic. “Some guys golf on the weekends; some guys sit around and watch sports,” he says. “Me? I play music with my friends.”

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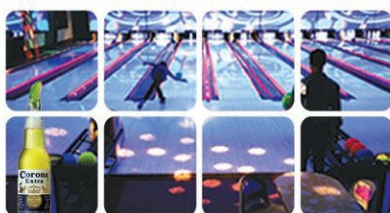
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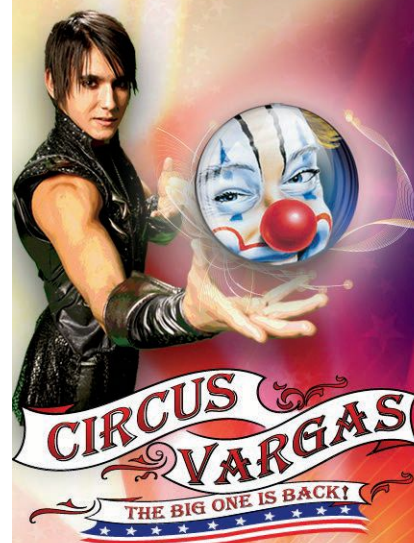
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calendar



friday>
WHAT A FEELING!

page 28
SUNDAY
THE LARGEST HIPSTER
GATHERING SINCE COACHELLA

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MONDAY
HE'S A CONNOISSEUR OF
GEEK/FREAK CULTURE

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WEDNESDAY
INTERNATIONAL ARTIST
RIMI YANG COMES TO LAGUNA

page 31
THURSDAY
AS MANY FOOD SAMPLES
AS YOU CAN HANDLE

KYLE FROMAN

fri/05/03

[ART]

Art for the Cause 'Love. Sex. Unity. Respect.'

Art With an Agenda, the local art organization propelled by social injustice, is back on the scene, this time supporting the fight for marriage equality and championing the LGBT community. Last year's Kelly Thomas-inspired exhibit exploded across the art scene and media outlets alike—and with an equally powerful force behind it, "Love. Sex. Unity. Respect." will help cast even more light onto this nationally spotlighted issue. But this is not the angry cry of last year's exhibit—this is a celebration of love (in all its forms) from the minds of 75 artists. Friday starts the two-day opening reception, coinciding with the Fullerton Art Walk. Half of all proceeds from art sales go toward the OC AIDS Walk.

"Love. Sex. Unity. Respect." at the Magoski Arts Colony, 223/225 W. Santa Fe, Fullerton; www.artwithanagenda.org. 6 p.m. Exhibit runs through May 25. Free. —ERIN DEWITT

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[DANCE]

Passions Aflame *Rodin*

The Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg returns to the Segerstrom Center with the West Coast premiere of *Rodin*, the company's new ballet based on the passionate and tragic romance of genius sculptor Auguste Rodin and his muse Camille Claudel. Told through Boris Eifman's signature choreography of graceful movement and fluid physical expression, this is the tale of two lovers bound by art and infatuation for 15 years—and the story of their breakup, which left Camille wretched and broken, ultimately losing sanity and spending the last 30 years of her life alone in a mental asylum. (Pints of ice cream and Nicholas Sparks movies don't look so bad now, do they?) Don't miss this masterpiece of dance during the troop's only West Coast performance.

Rodin performed by the Eifman Ballet at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787; www.scfta.org. 7:30 p.m.; also Sat.-Sun. \$29-\$119. —ERIN DEWITT

sat/05/04

[FESTIVAL]

Toast of the Town Orange County Food and Wine Festival

Some of OC's top restaurants come together with wineries from around California for the Fourth Annual Orange County Food and Wine Festival. Spend the evening eating, drinking and bidding on the live and silent auctions—all in the name of charity programs that support our local youth, including Children's Hospital of OC, Orange County Head Start, Shelter Box and Polio Plus. Taste samples from such restaurants as the Winery, Citrus City Grille and Marché Moderne while sipping on wine from more than 10 wineries in Napa, Sonoma, Paso Robles and Santa Barbara. A VIP ticket gains you early admittance; a champagne reception; a private, docent-led tour of the Lyon Air Museum; reserved seating; even a "premium" (a.k.a. bigger!) wine glass.

Fourth Annual Orange County Food and Wine Festival at the Lyon Air Museum, 19300 Ike Jones Dr., Santa Ana, (714) 210-4585; www.ocfoodandwine.com. 6 p.m.; VIP seating and private tour, 5 p.m. \$85-\$225. —JESSICA FORD

[CONCERT]

Well-Groomed The GBMC Three Year Anniversary

This one forced us to do quite the double take. Is this some sort of hipster band with an ironic name? Well, sort of. Tonight, Detroit Bar hosts the third anniversary of the Gentleman's Beard and Mustache Coalition (GBMC), a group that describes itself as a "collective of facial-hair enthusiasts."

The evening includes performances from the Black Tibetans, Los Mysteriosos and members of the GBMC doing punk covers. Grease up your nose neighbor and go celebrate the almighty 'stache. And while you're there, remember the words of the immortal Bard: "He that hath a beard is more than a youth, and he that hath no beard is less than a man."

The GBMC Three Year Anniversary at Detroit Bar, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 642-0600; www.detroitbar.com. 8 p.m. \$5. 21+. —BRANDON FERGUSON



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sun/05/05

[FESTIVAL]

Land and Sea URBAN OCEAN FESTIVAL

We're just going to continue with Earth Day celebrations through the rest of the year, okay? Keeping on trend is the Urban Ocean Festival held this weekend at the Aquarium of the Pacific. Highlighting our unique city-to-sea relationship, the family-friendly fest presents an array of ocean-environment activities and entertainment. On hand are the "Trashin' Fashion" show (featuring eco-friendly clothing made from recycled materials), a poetry contest, sustainable-seafood cooking demonstrations, boat cruises, mural painting, games, an art exhibit and live music. The Urban Ocean Festival seeks to increase awareness and appreciation for our watery neighbors—so quit throwing cigarette butts off the pier, will ya?

Urban Ocean Festival at the Aquarium of the Pacific, 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach, (562) 590-3100; www.aquariumofpacific.org. 9 a.m. \$14.95-\$25.95. —ERIN DEWITT

[CYCLING]

Wheels Go 'Round Cyclone Coaster Vintage Bike Ride

May is National Bike Month! (Yeah, news to us, too.) But with the bike culture ever-growing, the Cyclone Coaster's monthly Vintage Bike Ride is one of the largest in the country. Riders with all types of bikes are welcome to join, though the organization states that most cycles will be pre-World War II cruisers. It's a relaxed, leisurely ride around the LBC for about two hours (meaning if you're en route via automobile, you might get stuck in a herd of about 300 bicycles). The Cyclone Coaster ride begins with a meet-and-greet at Portfolio Coffee House, then departs at 10:30 a.m. sharp for a palm tree-flecked cruise through the bike-friendly city of Long Beach. A day on a candy-colored cruiser—not a bad way to spend a Sunday morning.

Cyclone Coaster Vintage Bike Ride meets at Portfolio Coffee House, 2300 E. Fourth St., Long Beach; www.cyclonecoaster.com. 9:30 a.m.; ride, 10:30 a.m. Free. —ERIN DEWITT



mon/05/06

[COMEDY]

Laugh Master Patton Oswalt

We'd say Patton Oswalt is the Jonathan Lethem of comedy, but we like Oswalt better than Lethem—he's a polymath for the Polybius set who can knock out an essay that's as heartfelt as it is hilarious, as well as a connoisseur of geek/freak culture who



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just commissioned a ripping set of Russ Meyer-meets-George Lucas *Star Wars* action figures. Ah, and, of course, the comedy. He's the star of *Ratatouille*, the guy on the other side of a split 7-inch with sludge-punkers the Melvins, the founder of the Comedians of Comedy tour, and

(with David Cross) an alumnus of Sub Pop Records. And he has since graduated to colossal things in the wider world. Surely, you'll be able to blow someone's mind one day with the story of how you saw him at the Irvine Improv.

Patton Oswalt at the Irvine Improv, 71 Fortune Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-5455; www.improv.com. 8 p.m. \$22. 18+.

—CHRIS ZIEGLER

tue/05/07

[CONCERT]

Royal Revolution Prince

In the 1980s, few things were as sexy, revolutionary or purple as the royal artist known as Prince. Even after a decades-long career, introducing us to Carmen Electra and Sheila E, and delivering various platinum-selling albums, he remains an enigma. Forget all the weird name changes and bizarre television interviews, the man is a pop-culture legend; he has given us *Purple Rain*, a killer *Batman* soundtrack and some of the hottest music videos of the late '80s—even Madonna couldn't touch him. For two nights at the Grove of Anaheim, he grants thirsty Orange County audiences a rendezvous with his classic, funky New Wave jams, along with newer material that isn't as readily available on the Internet. Backed by multitalented girl band 3RDEYEGIRL, Prince is gonna (dare we say it?) make you party like it's 1999.

Prince at the Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 712-2700; www.citynationalgroveofanaheim.com. 8 & 11:30 p.m.; also Wed. \$200. —AIMEE MURILLO

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[ART]

Art Star 'Seeking Future'

The JoAnne Artman Gallery once again reminds us why it's the premier beachside venue for new and fascinating figurative work with "Seeking Future," a solo exhibition by international artist Rimi Yang. Straddling genres and eras, Yang's work takes echoes of Old Masters' females and flips them into contemporary abstractions imbued with multicultural verve, melding images of the East and West so seamlessly it's never quite clear which is dominant. Her complex layers of texture and a patchwork brushstroke that is equal parts unnerving and inviting create movement and sensation in even the most tranquil of still-lives.

Rimi Yang's "Seeking Future" at JoAnne Artman Gallery, 326 N. Coast Hwy., Laguna Beach, (949) 510-5481; www.joanneartmangallery.com. 11 a.m. Through May 15. Free.
—SR DAVIES

[THEATER]

Fancy Footwork Flashdance

For some, the word "flashdance" conjures images of men in trench coats gyrating their pelvises and opening their coats to unsuspecting women on the streets (what a feeling!). In this case, however, it stands for the story of a young welder who just wants to dance. (She's a maniac on the floor!) The 1983 film *Flashdance* made a huge impression on pop culture and became a classic adored by women and welders the world over. So great was the story's impact on society that it was decided to turn the movie into a theatrical musical to titillate audiences all over again. Cut up a sweat shirt, tease that hair and dump some water on yourself in preparation for *Flashdance* at Segerstrom Center.

Flashdance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787; www.scfta.org. 7:30 p.m. Through May 19. \$20-\$82.50.
—AMANDA PARSONS



[CONCERT]

U.K. Sweetheart Kate Nash

British songbird Kate Nash flutters this week to the Observatory, the only Orange County stop on her current Girl Talk worldwide tour. Nash's poppy, anti-lame-boyfriend, anti-mean-girl subject matter made her an instant success with the tween set when she made her mainstream musical debut back in 2007, but it was her easy knack for catchy hooks and well-rounded melodies that won the critics' praise—and earned her a platinum-selling album, chart-topping singles and spots on "One to Watch" lists the globe over. Now she sets out to showcase her third studio album and, undoubtedly, win even more fans with her quirky charm and endearing charisma.

Kate Nash at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com. 8 p.m. \$15.
—ERIN DEWITT

[FESTIVAL]

Come and Get It Taste of Anaheim

For 18 years, the annual Taste of Anaheim festival has brought together the best restaurants in the city—from high-end, fine-dining establishments to mom-and-pop eateries. This year welcomes more than 30 restaurants to the culinary carnival, each giving out small bites of their most popular menu items. Unlike other food festivals, admission tickets to the Taste of Anaheim include as many samples as you can handle—no need to keep shelling out bucks to refill points on a food card. There's also live music, silent auctions and an incredible amount of booze for sale. Eat up!

Eighteenth Annual Taste of Anaheim at the Anaheim GardenWalk, 321 W. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 758-0222; www.tasteofanaheim365.com. 5:30 p.m. \$35-\$45. —ERIN DEWITT

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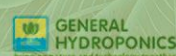
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POSTMODERN BIBIMBAP

JOSUE RIVERA

Bulgogi Nation

Urban Seoul is the latest Kogi knock-off, but it's a damn great one
BY EDWIN GOEI

It's impossible to talk about Urban Seoul without mentioning Roy Choi, the creator of Kogi, the pioneer of *loncheras*, America's unofficial ambassador to everything hipster ethnic, last seen traipsing across LA's Koreatown on a recent episode of Anthony Bourdain's new CNN show. To not do so would be akin to discussing computers without bringing up Bill Gates or summer blockbusters without giving a nod to Steven Spielberg. Choi may not have invented the Korean taco (he has admitted to being inspired by a food blogger when he started the Korean-Mexi truck that sparked the gourmet-food-truck movement), but the man is, inarguably, the person who single-handedly showed the world that kimchi and cheese, tortillas and gochujang were always meant to play together.

The new Urban Seoul at Irvine's Diamond Jamboree uses these proven flavor combos as a baseline. It may never admit it borrows from Kogi's original source code, but there's an unspoken understanding it wouldn't be here if Choi didn't blaze the trail first. Its chef, Kacy Jun, who worked with Azmin Ghahreman at Sapphire and James Hamamori at Wasa Sushi, already knows the Korean-Mexican formula works and that all he has to do is have the confidence to just stand back and let it happen.

Yet Urban Seoul is more than just a very capable Kogi cover band. I would argue that if you could go back in time to 2009 and secretly swap out the tacos Kogi sold on the streets of LA with the ones that Urban Seoul serves now, Choi would still become the icon he is today—the food is

that good. Though Urban Seoul's tacos are quite different from Kogi's (Jun uses lettuce instead of Kogi's signature tangy slaw), the point is the same: Bring the sugar-and-sesame-seed-oil-marinated goodness of tender bulgogi into the warm fold of a corn tortilla, and then witness the almost-magical reaction as the Mexican components mingle with the Korean ones.

Still, I prefer Urban Seoul's crispy pork-belly tacos over the bulgogi. The jagged scraps of what's essentially chopped up Filipino lechon kawale prove, yet again, that a piece of fatty pork can only get better when it's deep-fried. You get two per order, each drizzled with a gochujang-altered aioli and sprinkled with queso fresco. It's probably best to stick with the tacos and tortas than bother with the burgers or the sliders. The latter two fall victim to their bun—a Hawaiian-style roll that's always a bad idea for sliders, especially when the filling is this wet and includes marinated cucumbers you usually see as a panchan side dish. The bread is all but mashed flat, turning almost immediately into a damp, sauce-soaked, mealy mess.

You should also avoid the arepas, which do not resemble the light Venezuelan corn cakes they're supposed to emulate, but are rather leaden, crunchy hockey pucks so overly drenched with grease it's alarming. Get the quesadilla instead. In fact, do not go to Urban Seoul without ordering one—it's the greatest Korean-Mexi invention since Kogi's Blue Moon Mulita. Urban Seoul uses an actual kimchi pancake—a thin, vaguely spicy, delicate, crepe-like creation—in lieu of a flour tortilla, then

stuffs it with juicy grilled chicken, mozzarella and Cheddar cheese. It's like a bizarre omelet, served with ambrosial kimchi sour cream so addictive I considered licking the plastic thimble it came in.

Everything at Urban Seoul, by the way, is served in paper baskets, cardboard bowls or plastic thimbles; you'd think the place was once a food truck that went brick-and-mortar. It seems to believe its cuisine isn't appropriate for actual china and metal flatware, and I would agree. I can't imagine having the loaded fries—which are just crinkle-cut potatoes draped in movie-theater cheese sauce, adorned with bits of Korean spicy pork, lightly pickled jalapeños, scallions and pickled onions—in a vessel I couldn't crumple up and throw away.

Urban Seoul also leans more Korean than Kogi. Though it's called Urban 3B, the bibimbap with a poached egg is still very proper bibimbap. Its rendition of tteokbokki, a common Korean street food of chewy-as-gum rice cakes stir-fried in a sweet-and-spicy hell sauce, has the rice cake flash-fried first. And the so-called chicken lollipops—kinder, gentler Buffalo wings—are still served with tart cubes of pickled daikon. But there may not be a better traditional dish here than the japchae mari: stir-fried glass noodles encased in deep-fried seaweed stogies that end up tasting like the Korean version of tater tots.

In the not-so-distant future, when such Korean dishes will be as familiar to Americans as pizza, places such as this would have led the way, would have been the mountain men of the scene. Proof that it's already happening: I sat next to a table of white retirees who'd brought a bottle of wine to pair with their Korean tacos.

URBAN SEOUL

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You know what is the most overlooked city in Orange County? Lake Forest. It's a seeming no-man's-land between North and South County, a place where the politics are dirty, the people are nice, and the buildings a mix of tired tract housing and strip malls from the 1960s and '70s and gleaming new tract housing and shopping plazas from the past decade. But as a food city, it's in the top tier of the county's dining towns thanks to such high-concept places as Brû Grill and its many multicultural holes-in-the-wall. This is probably the only 'burb in Southern California with two Afghan restaurants—in a county with but three total.

But for the past year, Lake Forest's favorite dive not named Albatros has been Delicias Peruanas, a tiny spot near an Avila's El Ranchito. Seemingly all locals go in for a bite during the week: office drones on a lunch break, Latino families looking to see their soccer club on ESPN Deportes, Middle Eastern women sporting sweats and Gucci, regular 'mericans who have learned to love a good saltado after eating at Nory's for the past decade. At times, the service is sporadic because running the scene is a Peruvian man and his family (don't be surprised when you hear a kid you think is Asian speak in fluent Spanish—Chinese and Japanese have been migrating to Peru for centuries).

The entrées are tried-but-true standards—tallarines, saltados, ceviches and the like—that are priced a bit high. But trust in this bright spot. Though the family is always busy, they never stop with the smiles or smart advice, explaining meals for the clueless or recommending certain dishes based on personal taste. Though the price might make you wince, the orders are the largest you'll get outside of a Shakey's Bunch of Lunch: An order of milanesa, crunchy and buttery, is as wide as an old *Rolling Stone*, its gnarled crust featuring the hammer marks of Delicias' owner having pounded the piece of meat into shape just minutes earlier. Whether soups, tallarines or chaufas, all the foodstuffs are similarly epic, but don't think the food is just slopped on; the sides of rice are shaped into a pyramid, suggesting care worthy of a resort.

The most telling item on Delicias Peruanas' menu is the causa limeña, the greatest chicken salad in the world. Puréed russet potatoes around a ball of cold chicken, peas and olives? As epic as one of Machu Picchu's 50-ton stones.

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Señor Sandwich

Chuy Vidales of Avocado Café

ON THE LINE

» ANNE MARIE PANORINGAN

We randomly came across Irvine's Avocado Café, tucked into a high-rise community off Jamboree. The Huntington Beach spot opened off Main Street earlier this year. Chuy Vidales (a.k.a. the one-man marketing team) was taking exterior photos for the Facebook page before finally settling in for our interview.

Most undervalued ingredient:

Great management! It's the key component in any restaurant or business. It blows my mind how poorly some restaurants are managed. A majority of the time, everyone notices but the owners, but when a place is managed superbly, it is just expected and rarely appreciated.

Why avocados?

It was an "egg before the chicken" kind of situation. My business partner/brother Jon and our graphic designer Joe Mac thought of the name first, and everything great about the fruit came after. There are too many reasons. All of you avocado-lovers know what I'm talking about. They are magical.

Is there a dish you'd like to learn how to make?

Not necessarily. I just wish I had more of a passion to bake. My grandfather was a baker, and my mother's family owns bakeries in Mexico. I know it's in me.

Your earliest food memory:

It's a toss-up between my grandmother and mother teaching me how to make homemade tamales during the holidays and Chili Billy's at Huntington Valley Little League snack bar. Both were etched into my brain forever, and both are highly influential in their own ways at Avocado Café.

Favorite meal growing up:

Tuna-noodle casserole and confetti cake. Every birthday, baby! Thanks, Mom.

What do you recommend for first-timers?

The Chuy with a pickle on the side, of course! It is our best-seller, company-wide.

Most popular item at breakfast:

George's Breaky Burrito is the best-seller, but I like a great breakfast sandwich.

Those are hard to find. Our HB Breakfast Sandy is *epic*!

What is your beverage of choice, and where do you get it?

That's a tough one. I have had some of my best and worst nights after a Manbow with a floater (some people call it a Rain-bow) from Aloha Grill. It's an HB must-have for anyone new in town and a Fourth of July tradition for my family and friends. *Where was your most recent meal? What did you have?*

Avocado Café HB Reuter's Avo Original—no cucumbers, extra pickles, with a side of potato salad. Yummmmm!

Best culinary tip for the home cook:

Google! And pour a glass of wine for yourself.

Favorite places to eat (besides your own):

The No. 1 place is my kitchen with my 10 best friends for our Thursday-night "family" dinner. Next would be the late, great Villa Nova Restaurant in Newport Beach for its wine list and bar. Last is Captain Jack's Sunset Beach for king crab and prime rib!

How did the original Newport location get going?

A friend, Chris Moreno, showed us this little hole in the wall in the Newport Beach Athletic Club that needed a lot of love. It turned out being a great "test lab" for what was to come. We decided we wanted to combine a smoothie, juice bar and sandwich shop all in one and take all of our favorite places and do it our way, but *better*! Some paint on the walls, new flat-screen TVs, vision, passion and a lot of hard work, and here we are, three stores later, with a fourth store in the works. We truly owe it to each other. *Weirdest customer request (and did you do it?):*

I had a customer ask if they could sleep in the [Newport location's] bathroom for the evening. It's safe to say that didn't happen.

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A Question for the Ages

Which came first: The bar or taco stand Coco Renos?

LONG BEACH LUNCH
» SARAH BENNETT

“What came first: the chicken or the egg?” That question is irrelevant here. Far more pressing is which came first: the “World Famous” Reno Room or Coco Renos, its adjoining, Baja-style taco stand?

Many theories abound as to how a four-table storefront serving Mexican grub intertwined itself with a dive bar of Long Beach proportions. On the corner

screen door between Reno Room and the neighboring Somatic piercing shop.

A sunny, Baja beach scene—painted on the textured east wall—instantly puts you south of the border, and a false roof tries to give a faux balcony view. But one look to the other side of Coco Renos’ studio-apartment-size space, and you come face to face with the two peppy Mexican dudes who craft beach-side-worthy dinners using the rusty kitchen contraptions that line the wall.

Within moments of your arrival, you are given colorful tortilla chips and a chunky salsa without too much spice that is easily inhaled. Burritos—wet or dry—fill a plate, filled with either vegetarian options (including tofu and jicama root!) or whatever land or sea creature you desire (besides mahi mahi, which has been replaced with sole).

I’ve always preferred the combination plates, however, not only for the wider range of choices (enchiladas, tacos, chile rellenos, etc.), but also for the included sides of refreshing black beans and rose-tinted Spanish rice.

Everything at Coco Renos is solid, Mexi grub. Nothing too fancy, except for the mushroom tacos, for which the cooks season the hell out of baby brown bellas before flash-blackening them on the grill, then throwing them in a flour tortilla along with some house corn-avocado relish, a condiment that should be provided by the bowlful.

It’s easy to eat a light and cheap lunch at Coco Renos (two veggie tacos are \$4; combos start at \$6), but don’t be afraid to order up. This is one lunch that provides leftovers worthy of a microwaved midnight snack.



of Broadway and Redondo Avenue—straddling the border of nice Bluff Park and nicer Belmont Heights—is a two-headed haven for the vegan, meat-hungry and drunk alike.

The two businesses live in harmony, with heavy-handed Reno Room drinks being brought to customers at Coco Renos’ wooden, high-topped tables and blackened-sole tacos making their way to sweaty Reno Room booths in corners so dark you’d never know it’s noontime.

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Film-o for *Cinco*

Cinco de Mayo: The Battle channels the spirit of Mexican cinema's rise

BY AIMEE MURILLO

Sunday is Cinco de Mayo, and all of Orange County will engage in some type of Mexican mocking, whether trying to seduce some MILF at Javier's, getting shitfaced on discounted Coronas in HB, buying overpriced tortas at the festivals in Anaheim and Santa Ana, or wearing massive sombreros just for the hell of it—no one giving a damn about the actual event the holiday marks. If only there were some sort of god to force clueless *gabachos* (and Mexicans, for that matter) to sit down in penance and watch *Cinco de Mayo: The Battle*, a gripping war epic based on the actual Battle of Puebla between the French and Mexican armies that recently premiered at the Newport Beach Film Festival as its Mexican Spotlight film for this year.

Directed by Rafa Lara, the film not only illustrates the history behind the 1861 battle that kept away the Hapsburgs for one more year, but also seamlessly fuses

together fictional storylines to create a solid narrative. Starring Mexican actors Christian Vasquez, Kuno Becker and Liz Gallardo, it chronicles the imperial power struggle between England, France and Spain over Mexico, as well as the French appetite to seize Mexican soil, specifically the town of Puebla. Outnumbered by the French and lacking healthy soldiers and vital supplies, Mexican troops defend their homeland from the French monarchy's attack—a universal underdog story that should appeal to any audience.

Viewers can expect the graphic imagery and violence that any war epic warrants. The battle scenes were shot with a handheld camera, so the action feels grounded with documentary-style truthfulness. As the saying goes, war is hell.

This the largest picture Lara has ever made, as well as one of the largest produced in Mexico in recent memory. He decided to make *Cinco de Mayo* to commemorate the

event's 152nd anniversary, but he realized that to make it palatable to modern-day audiences, he needed to secure such marquee names as Becker, who plays the Mexican general Ignacio Zaragoza.

"[It's] every Mexican actor's dream to play Ignacio Zaragoza, considering what a major figure he is in Mexico," the baby-faced actor says. Rather unrecognizable as Zaragoza, Becker fills his role with fierce grit and humanity. Known stateside mostly for recurring roles on *Dallas*, *House* and *CSI: Miami*, he says he prefers the more rounded-out characters offered by Mexican filmmakers. "Foreign actors still feel some level of difficulty in breaking through American movies and television, but I'm fortunate to be able to adapt to both countries' industries, and I'm proud that Mexico's film industry is growing and thriving like it is."

"Our cinema is definitely going to be taking off a lot more now," Lara adds. "I wrote *Cinco de Mayo* with a global audience in mind—it's not just for Mexicans. And soon it will be distributed all over the world. [The Battle of Puebla] seems like a tiny event, but it changed the course of history and affects every country. Can you imagine what kind of world we'd be living in now if Mexico had lost against the French or, worse, given up?"

What seems most impressive about *Cinco de Mayo* is its micro budget; it cost about \$10 million to make and was completed in only nine weeks. "I had to find ways to be creative with this film; I didn't want the money to be a disadvantage," Lara says. "It's probably the biggest, most expensive film Mexico has ever made. But I hear feedback all the time about how good it looks and how expensive it must have been to make. But we produced the whole thing with a fraction of what it costs to make an American film."

Financing films in Mexico is something Lara admits is difficult, but he looks back at the experience of making *Cinco de Mayo* as exemplary of the Mexican experience. "I had the help of thousands of people, from the people of Puebla to the extras," he says. "We will always find ways to tell our stories, no matter what. Working within limitations creates interesting outcomes because it makes us focus on quality over quantity. It's the Latino way."

Drinko for *Cinco* to that, *cabrones*.

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

CINCO DE MAYO: THE BATTLE was written and directed by Rafa Lara; and stars Christian Vasquez, Kuno Becker and Liz Gallardo. Rated R.

opening

IRON MAN 3 Where has Robert Downey Jr. gone? There's no doubt he's the star of *Iron Man 3*; he sprints through the picture like a neurotic panther. And yet he's curiously absent, detached in a Zenlike way from the whole affair. The nakedness that defines his best performances has become, paradoxically, a kind of mask, not unlike the sleek, airbrushed-looking one he wears as the superhero incarnation of cocky kajillionaire Tony Stark. Today, Downey could play Stark in his sleep. The jittery self-doubt, the look-at-me hubris, the Boy Scout cluelessness about women: He's become so proficient in his believability that you can hardly believe a minute of it. Maybe you don't need to believe much in *Iron Man 3*. This is the first in the franchise to be directed by Shane Black, and only the second picture the prolific action screenwriter has made. (The first was the marvelously nerve-jangling *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, also starring Downey.) On the plus side, Black has a puckish sense of humor, and shows a healthy resistance to the comic-booky self-seriousness of the Batman movies. The villains in *Iron Man 3*, for example, include the Mandarin, a pointy-bearded sage who's half Osama bin Laden, half Ming the Merciless. He's played with bug-eyed hamminess by Ben Kingsley, and the movie is spooky, silly, or both whenever he's onscreen. But the big problems with *Iron Man 3* are less specific to the movie itself than they are characteristic of the hypermalaise that's infected so many current megablockbusters—too much plot, too

much action, too many characters, too many pseudo-feelings. The mechanics of *Iron Man 3* are complex and ram-bunctious, like Keystone Kops, bouncing off one another and ultimately canceling one another out. (PG-13) Stephanie Zacharek. *Countywide*.

ongoing

THE ANGELS' SHARE Over the course of its first 60 minutes, Ken Loach's *The Angels' Share* proves a testament to its director's enduring reputation as a master of British cinema and the social realist form, articulating the frustrations of Glasgow's working class with clarity and sophistication. Robbie (non-actor Paul Brannigan) is a brash ne'er-do-well and recent father endeavoring, quite in earnest, to abandon a life of crime in favor of much-needed stability. His quest for redemption through community service and a newfound interest in the world of whiskey—a matter of smelling and tasting rather than simply imbibing, of course—forms the heart of this story, which is told with humor and empathy. Loach, always attuned to the nuances of social problems both personal and systemic, negotiates the audacious tonal shifts with confident ease, oscillating from candid kitchen-sink drama (a flashback finds Robbie nearly beating a stranger to death in the street) to broad humor (fart jokes and kilt gags abound). But when *The Angels' Share* suddenly transforms, in its final act, into a kind of farcical heist picture, that fleeting slapstick tendency wins out, regrettably diminishing the film's social consciousness in the process. It's one of the strangest narrative piv-

ots in recent memory, reducing what began as a smart film about class to a vacuous one about nothing much at all, implicitly trivializing its serious themes the moment it decides to abandon them. (Not Rated) Calum Marsh. *Regency Rancho Niguel 8, Laguna Niguel*.

ARTHUR NEWMAN In *Arthur Newman*, a film about emotional displacement and the universal desire to change our lives, you'll understand why Wallace Avery (Colin Firth) is eager to ditch his and fake a new identity. Fired from a dead-end job, with a divorced-off teenage son he can't relate to, Avery stages an oceanside drowning and takes off in a sporty convertible. Firth's persona is of a nice guy, even a worrier, and his Wallace is set on repairing the mistake he made back when he was a once-promising professional golfer. Will he have the chutzpah to pass himself off as Arthur Newman, golf coach? Some he finds in Michaela (Emily Blunt), a cute but drugged-out klepto he rescues roadside. Traveling from Florida to Terre Haute, Indiana, with its promise of lush putting greens, their car is often the only one on the highway as debut director Dante Ariola sets up the surrealistic central conceit: The couple squat in empty houses and role-play the imagined sex lives of their absentee hosts, their one way to connect romantically. Fun for a bit, things soon turn silly, so it's a relief when the film cuts to Wallace's girlfriend back home, a surprisingly muted, sweet Anne Heche. Wallace's son (Lucas Hedges) finds her in his dad-quest, and their undefined friendship is more intriguing than anything else here. (Not Rated) Marsha McCreadie. *Countywide*.

THE BIG WEDDING Justin Zackham's vile *The Big Wedding* opens with a foray back through silver-screen history. When Ellie (Diane Keaton) walks in on her ex-husband, Don (Robert De Niro), as he moves to perform kitchen-counter cunnilingus on his new girlfriend, Bebe (Susan Sarandon), it's possible to see aging legends of the cinema imagined suddenly together, as if Annie Hall and Travis Bickle and Louise Sawyer one day found themselves playing out some producer's laziest scene ideas. There is, in other words, a lot of history in *The Big Wedding*—a history the film not so much squanders as utterly defaces. The wedding here is an excuse to draw together cardboard characters whose prefab arcs end as obviously as they begin. The moment we're introduced to virginal doctor Jared (Topher Grace), we can be assured that we'll see him pop his proverbial cherry by film's end. Same goes for elder sister Lyla (Katherine Heigl), whose pained journey from barren womb to baby bump is too predictable to bother spoiler-warning. All this is held together by casual racism. The son about to be married is Alejandro (Ben Barnes), adopted

as a child from Colombia. His biological mother, the devoutly religious Madonna (Patricia Rael), will be visiting for the ceremony, joined by Nuria (Ana Ayora), Alejandro's biological sister, and together the two represent some of the most repugnant foreign stereotyping in years. The film divides these women—the only non-white characters—into a literal mother/whore dichotomy. Nuria is relegated to the demeaning role of an exotic Other only present to strip nude and seduce one of the white male leads. (R) Calum Marsh. *Countywide*.

BLANCANIEVES The new film from Spanish writer/director Pablo Berger is a silent, black-and-white film so witty, riveting, and drop-dead gorgeous that moviegoers may forget to notice that they can't hear the dialogue. Astutely, Berger has chosen to wrap his experiment around a tale everyone knows: the perils of that sweet beauty, Snow White. Here, she is Carmen (Sofia Oria), born in 1920s Seville to a mother who dies in childbirth. After the death of her grandmother, Carmen is sent to live with the paralyzed bullfighter father (Daniel Giménez Cacho) she's never met, as well as his new wife and former nurse (Maribel Verdú)—the very measure of a wicked stepmother. Eventually, of course, there will be dwarfs, but Berger's seven lugs are bullfighters, not miners, and one of them (Sergio Dorado) looks at Carmen (now played by Macarena García) the way a prince looks at his princess. Don't expect Berger's *Snow White* to play out like Grimm's tale or Disney's masterpiece. In the hardscrabble reality of the flesh-and-blood real world, living happily ever after, the filmmaker suggests, is complicated stuff. (Not Rated) Chuck Wilson. *Edwards Westpark 8, Irvine*.

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP It's time, apparently, for the aging ghosts of '60s radicalism to once again take stock of their sins and compromises. Once it gets its walkers moving, Robert Redford's *The Company You Keep* nearly plays like a green-granola-lefty counterpart to *The Expendables*, a Hollywood Elderhostel reunion crowded with septuagenarian icons looking back on the righteousness and failures of the Nixon-'Nam era with rheumy retirees' eyeballs. The story, from Neil Gordon's novel about the contemporary fate of a few surviving Weather Underground fugitives, all but blows a trumpet for how rad rad used to be. First Susan Sarandon's Vermont housewife, her kids all grown up, throws in the secret-identity towel and surrenders herself to the FBI; from there, the dominoes tumble, leading cub reporter Shia LaBeouf to uncover the similarly fake ID of Redford's upstate lawyer, sending this suede-faced ex-Weatherman running. The FBI closes in, LaBeouf's annoying snoop pesters every single other character motivated only by his journalistic creed, and withering guest-stars (Julie

Christie, Sam Elliott, Richard Jenkins, a phlegm-plagued Nick Nolte) emerge to crinkle and wheeze about the good old days of bank robberies and protests. Redford's noble Methuselah isn't just self-preserving—he's got an unseasonably preadolescent daughter to worry about, and a case for his own redemption to make. It's little surprise that *The Company You Keep* turns out to be politically chicken-hearted—the progressive cant we hear sounds idiotic, and political principles are seen as pathetic challenges to the demands of family and law and order. Redford succeeds only in defanging the idea of resistance altogether. Far from engaged, the film surrenders in an arthritic faint. (R) Michael Atkinson. *Countywide*.

DISCONNECT Identity theft! Cyber bullying! Runaway teens doing lurid cam shows! This ambitious, multi-storied, state-of-us-all ensemble drama plumbs our fears of the plugged-in now more stridently than local news in TV sweeps. While well-crafted and at times moving, screenwriter Andrew Stern's cautionary tales can't help but feel behind the curve, the news they're so urgently sharing already fully absorbed by the culture. They still build some power, especially the central story of a misfit teen (Jonah Bobo) getting catfished by a couple of bullies—and then the inevitable shame of a 15-year-old's nude pix getting shared all over his high school. With tenderness and economy, Stern and director Henry-Alex Rubin humanize all parties, especially the bullies and the father of the poor, pranked kid; this story accumulates serious weight and vitality. That dad is played by Jason Bateman, who proves adept at drama, although it's little surprise when this distracted, suit-and-tie middle-management type winds up in a hopeless brawl on a suburban lawn, as that's in the cards for all Jason Bateman characters. A less involving thread involves TV news reporter (Andrea Riseborough) getting too close to a male runaway (Max Thieriot) who masturbates on webcam. Then there's the long-soured married couple whose accounts get drained via the usual cyber-pilferers—this family seems to have the same do-nothing, plot-advancing credit card company Bateman had in *Identity Thief*. That said, one of their moments resonates: husband and wife (Paula Patton and Alexander Skarsgård), each with the other's Internet history laid bare, finally coming to see each other. *Disconnect* might play better a decade from now, when it's more clearly a compendium of contemporary fears rather than some dire expression of them. (R) Alan Scherstuhl. *Countywide*.

FILLY BROWN In the underdog vein of hip-hop stardom dramas like *Hustle & Flow*, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, and gold standard *8 Mile*, co-directors Youssef Delara and Michael D. Olmos' variation on the too-familiar subgenre (the rising inner-city superstar here is a Latina tomboy) is more heartfelt, humanistic, and entertaining than such a clichéd showbiz cautionary tale has any right to be. Or maybe those superlatives should be spit about breakout lead Gina Rodriguez, a two-fisted knockout as streetwise L.A. wunderkind Majo "Filly Brown" Tonorio, whose angriest sociopolitical rhymes have been borrowed wholesale from an uneasy inspiration: "My moms is up in Chino on a 10 count," Majo admits to her new loverboy, DJ, just before her image is sexed up by a small-time producer and scooped up by a bigger label's thuggy operators. It's all in the service of getting her manipulative junkie madre (the late norte-a singer

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Jenni Rivera) out of the slammer, and helping both her impressionable younger hermana and struggling contractor pops (Lou Diamond Phillips, sharing screen time with his *Stand and Deliver* foil Edward James Olmos as Majo's lawyer). Ain't nothing new in this game, but even if selling out and "looking the part you're not" are derivative beats, with this cast they still pound. (R) Aaron Hillis. *Countywide*.

FROM UP ON POPPY HILL "It's right out of a cheap melodrama," one character remarks in *From up on Poppy Hill*, after a particularly extreme twist of fate—yet this film's gentle storytelling manages to extract the emotional payoffs of melodrama without ruining one's suspension of disbelief. A film about fathers and children, and the way we use the past as a prism for the present, *Poppy Hill* is fittingly a collaboration between Japanese anime master Hayao Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*) and his son Goro (Tales From Earthsea). Our endearing protagonist is Umi (voiced by Sarah Bolger), a high school student in Yokohama, 1963. With an absent mother and a dead father, Umi has plenty of responsibilities, but adolescence being what it is, she's dragged into helping her crush, Shun (Anton Yelchin), save a local clubhouse from demolition. If the film was merely a depiction of adolescent longing, its portrayal of that state alone would be worth your \$12—unconstrained by the limitations of the human face, the animators paint remarkably nuanced states of teenage distress onto their principals. (You may be brought back to your own pimple-laden past.) Yet *Poppy Hill* also explores Umi's attempts to identify with a father she barely knew for the sake of her own budding individuality, and Shun's attachment to the clubhouse out of respect for its past. Some third-act revelations may really test the scales of plausibility, but *Poppy Hill* ultimately is not about its story as much as the emotional states it probes. (Not Rated) Zachary Wigon. Edwards Westpark 8, Irvine.

LORDS OF SALEM After two *Halloween* remakes, rock star turned filmmaker Rob Zombie has penned a somber, surprisingly tame tale of witchcraft and possession that may trigger unintended giggles among even his most devoted admirers. Sheri Moon Zombie, the director's wife, stars as Heidi Hawthorne, a Salem, Massachusetts, radio DJ who begins hearing voices and having bloody visions after listening to a heavy metal LP given to her under mysterious circumstances. Her neighbors are three witches descended from a 17th century coven determined to call forth the Devil, who's looking to find the right woman to give him a son and heir. Zombie takes all this very seriously, staging flashbacks to unholy ceremonies that feel disturbingly authentic, while surrounding Heidi—a disappointingly timid character—with decrepit, corpulent demons we can see but she cannot. The movie is eerily photographed (by Brandon Trost), but never suspenseful or scary, and eventually, events descend into goat-sacrificing silliness. Any fun to be had here lies in spotting the many old-school character actors Zombie has hired, from Bruce Davison and Dee Wallace to Meg Foster and Maria Conchita Alonso, all of whom have faced their fair share of movie monsters over the years—to far more memorable effect. (R) Chuck Wilson. *Countywide*.

NO PLACE ON EARTH Part *The Diary of Anne Frank*, part *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and part *The Shawshank Redemption*, *No Place on Earth*, about a Ukrainian Jewish family in WWII

who hides from the Nazis by living in caves, has all the elements of a great story: an epic quest (survival), formidable obstacles (Nazis discovering each hiding place), and clever solutions to those obstacles (digging new exits, finding new caves). Unfortunately, the telling, by director Janet Tobias, is no match for the story. At the beginning, the film seems to be a documentary about a spelunker, Chris Nicola, who years later discovers the remains of one of the family's encampments and seeks survivors and relatives with little luck. But our luck is much better; without explanation, the family is suddenly narrating, and in a pastiche of styles. At times, some survivors, now in their dotage, give interviews; at others, Tobias re-enacts scenes, all narrated in voiceover, making it a feat just to tell who's talking, when, and whether what we're seeing is straight-up fictional. Those narrators aren't always the clearest storytellers, either, so viewers must often rely on the re-enactments, but Tobias keeps those shrouded in darkness, making the picture often as murky as the words. The stats relayed at the movie's end—the women, who unlike the men never left for food or supplies, hold the world record for the longest time spent in a cave—almost have more impact than the narrative. (Not Rated) Lily Janiak. Edwards Westpark 8, Irvine.

OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN The first of this year's dueling *Die Hard* in the *White House* opuses (to be followed in June by Roland "Independence Day" Emmerich's *White House Down*) begins with a slo-mo Old Glory and the first horns and snare drums of composer Trevor Morris' John-Williams-on-steroids score—and, well, things get a lot more "America! Fuck yeah!" from there. Directed at a jingoistic fever pitch by Training Day's Antoine Fuqua, *Olympus Has Fallen* quickly

hurtles through the bare minimum of exposition—a square-jawed, newly widowed POTUS (Aaron Eckhart); a brooding ex-Secret Service hotshot (Gerard Butler) who blames himself for the First Lady's death—before unleashing a small army of North Korean baddies on Pennsylvania Avenue's most desirable address. What follows is an all-you-can-eat buffet of shlock, from the retro, *Robocop*-era visual effects to the Delta Force-worthy parade of Oscar winners and nominees in peril (Secretary of State Melissa Leo, Speaker of the House Morgan Freeman, Secret Service Director Angela Bassett, Army Chief of Staff Robert Forster) to the utterly shameless 9/11 imagery (including Beltway tourists crushed by chunks of an imploding Washington Monument). A *Red Dawn* for the Tea Party era, *Olympus Has Fallen* is pretty ridiculously entertaining—or at least entertainingly ridiculous—for long stretches, dulled only by the realization that there are many parts of the country where this will play as less than total farce. (R) Scott Foundas. *Countywide*.

PAIN & GAIN Doesn't America promise riches and luxury to people who deserve it? Daniel Lugo—the lead in Michael Bay's neon-noir ode to Miami, muscle tone, and the modern American dream—believes so, but is stuck as an underpaid personal trainer at Miami Lakes' Sun Gym, where he boosts the confidence of customers far less chiseled than he and dreams of a better (read: richer) life. So, together with some muscle-bound accomplices, Lugo plots to kidnap his rich and ever-sneering Colombian client Victor Kershaw (Tony Shalhoub) and torture him until he gives up everything he owns: his swanky mansion, successful deli, bright orange speedboat, the works. Bay's film is based on, and mostly faithful to, a true

story penned by Pete Collins for the *Miami New Times* in late 1999. The Sun Gym Gang isn't made up of professional mobsters. They're musclebound egotists with a sense of importance more inflated than their steroid-pumped pecs, and Bay wastes no opportunity for laughs at their bungling. Dressed in military fatigues, they show up at Kershaw's home expecting to catch him alone; he's hosting a Seder. Though this story needs no embellishment, Bay can't help himself. He adds wild shoot-outs, slow-mo effects, Instagram-esque freeze-frames, and B-movie-style gore. (Those who remember the Sun Gym Gang's murdered victims probably won't appreciate seeing one of their heads explode like a pumpkin beneath a falling barbell weight.) When the story crashes into a too-perfect ending, it's because Bay was led astray by the same things that got the Sun Gym Gang into this mess in the first place: superficiality, ambition, and the belief that reality just isn't good enough. (R) Ciara LaVelle. *Countywide*.

THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES *Blue Valentine* director Derek Cianfrance makes a concerted stab at the epic with this two-and-a-half-hour roundelay of failed fathers and unloved sons trapped in a vicious cycle of emascu-

lated rage. Ryan Gosling (and his chiseled abdomen) stars as a motorcycle stunt driver in a traveling carnival who, upon learning he's fathered an infant son, puts down roots in upstate New York and becomes an armed bank robber instead. He eventually crosses paths with a rookie cop (a terrific Bradley Cooper), who becomes the central figure of the movie's second act, a charismatic climber in a pre-cinct full of dirty cops (one played—in a folly of typecasting—by Ray Liotta). Finally, it's 15 years later, and the sons of both cop and robber (excellent newcomers Emory Cohen and Dane DeHaan) find themselves sorting out their entwined destinies. Cianfrance's third feature has a go-for-broke, everything-I-ever-wanted-to-put-into-a-movie quality to it; it seems to have been conceived in a dazed rush after marathon readings of Aeschylus, Hemingway and Larry Brown. But while the acting is excellent, the metaphors are heavy, the plotting thin and repetitive. Sure to inspire indifference and cultish admiration in nearly equal measure, this extravagant mess may someday be reevaluated as a misunderstood masterpiece. (R) Scott Foundas. *Countywide*.

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Reading the Internet-Lunatic Tea Leaves

The Thugs at Cal Rep talks to the insanity among us
BY JOEL BEERS

There are plays that work very hard to say a lot of things in as many words as possible. They stretch on and on, satisfying every question, resolving every issue, leaving no doubt to the playwright's intent.

And then there are plays such as *The Thugs*. Nothing in Adam Bock's 2006 OBIE-award winning play, from the title to its Dunder-Mifflin-esque office, seems to make sense. We're never sure exactly what is happening or why it's happening. Yet the 55-minute express ride is intense, infused with creepy malevolence and dark humor. And though it's ultimately a cipher, it's a fascinating riddle, one that somehow manages to say a great deal without saying anything specific.

One thing is certain: The play is set in an office on the ninth floor of a towering building. It appears to be staffed by a flotilla of legal aids, but why they are continually stamping documents and why empty boxes of printer paper are strewn everywhere are never fully addressed.

The play begins lightly, with Mercedes (Roma Maffia) arriving first and cooing to a stuffed animal that is the centerpiece of her desk. But as the rest of her officemates arrive, it's clear they are working under a looming tension. Someone on the fourth floor has died recently, perhaps been murdered, and police are sniffing around the building. The convenience store on the first floor is closed. The company's boss didn't come to work today. The characters are, at turns, consumed by the recent events and in denial about them. Gossip and speculation prevail, a cache of snacks provides welcome relief, and everyone knows some-

thing's happening here, but what it is ain't exactly clear.

We're given very little information about these characters' back stories; all we have to gauge them on are their reactions to the nightmare unfolding around everyone. There's Elaine (Sarah Underwood Saviana), who seems to be the most blasé about the situation, but who either falls or is pushed down the stairs and returns to her desk, bloody. There's Sarah (Alexandra Billings), who, when not mired in paperwork, either erupts in spontaneous laughter or blurts out information as though a honking goose. There's Daphne (Anna Steer), who provides most of the comic relief, as she is very forthright about how much she hates work and what a bad worker she is—but even her nonchalant aura is checked by the arrival of her boyfriend, Joey (Andre Garner), who is apparently trying to extort money from her. Added to the mix are Diane (Tiffanne Hall), who seems to be the most in charge; Chantal (Suzannah Gratz), a temp dropped into the middle of this mess; and the lone male, Bart (Christopher Foster-Shaw).

The play is briskly directed by Anne Justine D'Zmura, who manages to pull solid performances from her eight-person ensemble, which skillfully navigates Bock's short bursts of dialogue, shifting conflicts and long, eerie silences. Again: We may not know exactly what is occurring, but the brooding atmosphere and looming menace of *something* turns this into a white-knuckler that gets positively hair-raising with the gruesome final image.

Issues of domestic violence and the faceless culture of corporate America manifest from time to time, but the most

compelling idea broached is good, old-fashioned American paranoia. At one point, Sarah delivers a short monologue that efficiently condenses the metric between the amount of people talking about something and the way that talking, thanks to the Internet, turns into an avalanche of wide-eyed rumormongering. Though the play was written seven years ago, it's clear, in the wake of ridiculous false flags by the lunatic fringe—everything from the 2011 Norway mass murders to the Boston Marathon bombings—that Bock was clearly reading the tea leaves. Even though characters are gripped by fear in the wake of a faceless terror, that terror still exists. Something is out there, and the strength of Bock's play lies in that brooding ambiguity.

The Thugs is the last production in Joanne Gordon's 10-year tenure as artistic director of California Repertory Co., a professional company that's an extension of Cal State Long Beach's graduate theater program. She inherited a program in disarray (her predecessor had basically turned it into a vehicle for his plays) and, in 2006, was forced to move from a 99-seat theater due to seismic concerns. But she energized Cal Rep's programming and oversaw a successful 2009 move to the Royal Theatre, tucked in the back end of the *Queen Mary*. Whoever follows in the footsteps of the retiring Gordon better have some strong sandals.

THE THUGS

at Royal Theatre, 1123 Queens Hwy., Long Beach, (562) 985-5526; www.calrep.org. Thurs.-Sat., May 2-4, 8 p.m. \$20-\$25.

TRENDZILLA

» MICHELLE WOO

Airstream It Up

I hate to be a female stereotype, but camping has never been my thing. There are good things about it, of course—stargazing, s'mores, zero cell-phone reception (at last!). But there are also bugs. And possibly bears. And, well, no cell-phone reception.

Still, summer is near, and 'tis the season to spend work hours daydreaming about your next vacation, right? I recently came across a magazine photo that made me gasp: a shiny, aluminum airstream parked on a cliff, overlooking the glistening sea. Hey, *that* I can do.

Turns out, you can stay in one of these retro icons for a long weekend. Rent An Airstream (www.rentanairstream.com) will deliver a renovated, fully loaded trailer to any campground or RV park in Southern California, from San Diego to Santa Barbara. Each is outfitted with your basic luxuries—a bed, fold-out couch, stove, oven, fridge, dinette area, toilet, shower, television, Blu-ray player, LED lighting and solar panels. And yes, fellow addicts, the Airstream is WiFi-ready.

But what you really want to see is outside the vehicle.

"You don't need to check in and walk through the hotel elevators," says owner Tinno Wong. "You wake up, get out of bed, open the door, and your feet are touching sand."

An aerodynamic marvel, the Airstream's distinctive bullet-like shape dates back to the 1930s. Its creator, Wally Byam, wrote in his creed, "To place the great wide world at your doorstep for you who yearn to travel with all the comforts of home." For many of today's devotees, the trailer evokes a nostalgia for a simpler era.

Years ago, Wong decided to try an Airstream after he was having trouble finding a hotel that allowed dogs. He and his wife drove it to Sacramento and loved the experience. "It inspires adventure," he says. And "it looks so cool."

There's no need to travel long distances for a lovely getaway. Based in Chino, the company has sent its fleet to picturesque gems across Orange County, including Crystal Cove, Bolsa Chica, San Onofre and Huntington Beach. The rate is \$175 per night for most models (plus delivery, service and campground fees), and there's a three-night minimum.

So, when are we going?

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Please, Don't Sing That

The worst karaoke songs, according to Jo Koy
BY ALI LERMAN

While you might know him from his regular guest spots on E!'s *Chelsea Lately*, his raucous comedy DVDs or sold-out standup shows, comedian Jo Koy knows how to use a mic for more than just spitting out jokes. Turns out he's also a huge music buff and has a pretty terrific set of pipes himself. He can actually sing!

But he's still a comic first, and he definitely takes pride in making fun

of people who can't carry a tune—yet think they can. Whenever Koy is in need of new material, hitting up a karaoke joint is easily one of his favorite places from which to draw inspiration. And we all know there are some songs that are just going to sound horrible and hilarious no matter who sings them. With that in mind, we recently sat down with the 20-year comedy vet before his two-weekend stint at the Irvine Improv to get his picks for the five worst karaoke songs of all time.

Just be glad you don't actually have to hear some drunkard trying to sing them in person.

5. SIR MIX-A-LOT'S "BABY GOT BACK"

"There is nothing worse than people rapping 'Baby Got Back.' It's already a horrible rap song, but to hear people who don't know how to rap try to rap this? That's even worse! It doesn't even matter who tries to do this one. It's just that one song where you are like, 'Let Sir Mix-a-Lot rap it. It's his song, so let's not even try.' It's just a horrible one."

4. JOHN TRAVOLTA AND OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN'S "SUMMER NIGHTS"

"This is already the worst duet in the history of music. Why are you going to make it worse by having two people who can't sing try to sing it, you know what I mean? John Travolta was a horrible singer, and pairing him up with Olivia Newton-John was already rough to listen to by itself. And now we're listening to Sean Henderson from accounting and Sue Smith from Wendy's singing it together onstage? Awful idea."

3. ROBERTA FLACK'S "KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS SONG"

"There is nothing worse than a chick who thinks she can sing a powerful ballad like this in a bar full of drunks. Way to bring the damn mood down in the club! We were trying to get drunk, lady! The worst part is when they try to hold the microphone out to the crowd because they think everyone is going to join in and sing the chorus part with her. 'La la laaaa la laaaaa. Whoaaa ohhh ohhhh. Whoaaa ohhh ohhh. Whoaaa ohhh ohhhh.'"

And then she vomits. Any version of this song, you need to leave it to the professionals. Otherwise, it's just bad."

2. JOURNEY'S "DON'T STOP BELIEVING"

"I really mean any Journey song with Steve Perry, not [their new lead singer] the Filipino guy. 'She took the midnight train, going anyyyywherrrrre.' 'Don't stop... belieeeeeeeving!' Yeah, obviously that guy stopped believing when he got onstage. I love Journey, especially now because Filipino Journey is even better. If you close your eyes, Filipino Journey is Steve Perry. If you open your eyes, it's Ronaldo Gonzales. [Laughs.] But with karaoke, don't do any of their songs, especially 'Don't Stop Believing.' There is only one guy who can sound like Steve Perry, and that is the Filipino guy that is in Journey."

1. QUEEN'S "BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY"

"I personally think no one should do 'Bohemian Rhapsody' in karaoke... ever! Don't sing it, especially if there is only one person onstage because now, you have to do all of the characters. 'Galileo! Galileo! Galileo! Galileo!' You'll look like a real asshole. Plus, there is only one person who can sound like Freddie Mercury. It's the Filipino guy from Journey."

JO KOY

performs at the Irvine Improv, 71 Fortune Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-5455; www.Improv.com.

Thurs.-Sat., May 2-4 & May 9-11. See the website for show times and ticket prices.

For more info on Koy, visit www.JoKoy.com and follow him on Twitter: @JoKoy.

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Strange Trip

Psychedelic bands from around the world converge on Santa Ana for Psycho de Mayo
BY NATE JACKSON

On a recent night in downtown LA, Evan Hagen holds up one of his clear, handmade, oil-projector slides to the lamp in his bedroom. The long hours spent prepping for the final days of the first festival he created are evident in his tired eyes. Wearing a purple hoodie and blue jeans, he sits cross-legged on orange, shag carpet as he rotates the disc-shaped slide slowly in his palms. Within it, globs of viscous yellow and blue paint clash and coagulate as though blooming puddles of rainbow spit. These custom-made discs, he says, are part of what make the shows he throws with Thief Presents—his LA/OC production company—unique among all the laser-light bullshit you typically see at clubs.

“These things have sort of become my calling card,” Hagen says. “Setting the right vibe at my shows is always this art form for me.”

This weekend, Hagen’s ability to create an impression on the walls of the Yost Theater is more important than ever. Not only did the LA promoter/Yorba Linda native pick Santa Ana as ground zero for a day-long international psychedelic-rock fest, but it’s also happening on Cinco de Mayo.

In the midst of a massive city-sponsored street fair drawing upward of 20,000 people, the inaugural head-banging bacchanal—dubbed Psycho de Mayo—boasts four stages, with bands flying in from all over the world. Side venues for the fest include Proof Bar, the newly remodeled Copper Door and the Gypsy Den. Headlined by Canadian drone-pop act Black Mountain,

the anticipated, brain-rattling lineup features New York City’s A Place to Bury Strangers; LA stalwarts Dead Meadow; and Dead Skeletons, a legendary Icelandic group making their first pilgrimage to OC.

Amassing this arsenal of talent from all corners of the psych-rock world is a bona-fide sign of Thief Presents burgeoning credibility. “It creates a special environment for kids to come out,” says Bret Constantino of San Francisco’s Sleepy Sun, also performing on the bill. “They really know how to create a vibe of their own, and it makes it much more cohesive to the way we perform.”

Working as a promoter at Proof several years ago, Hagen, 27, would have considered organizing a festival with more than 40 psychedelic bands a pipe dream. But last fall, he returned to his old stomping grounds. Once a week, Hagen wrangled a rotating lineup of psych bands for a weekly club called Topicali Tuesdays in the upstairs room of the Yost. “The whole time I was upstairs, I was just looking downstairs and thinking, ‘Fuck, I wanna use that room,’” Hagen remembers. Six months ago, he approached owners Dennis Lluy and Dave Leon about throwing a festival, and they offered him any Sunday night he wanted. At the time, May 5 seemed the most logical choice.

Coming on the heels of Austin Psych Fest (produced annually in April by Austin buzz band the Black Angels), Psycho de Mayo aligns perfectly with bands looking to stay on tour for an extra week or so. It’s also fitting considering that festival’s influence on Hagen, who traveled to

Texas last year to handle lighting duties for Dead Meadow. It was during that tour that Hagen’s eyes were opened to the far-reaching power wielded by the psychedelic scene. “When [Dead Meadow] walked onstage, Jason [Simon] just rolled out this solo. He was frying—he did an eighth of mushrooms before he walked onstage—and there were 5,000 people there,” Hagen says. “It took my breath away.”

One year later, Dead Meadow is also playing the festival. “Evan’s festival reflects his taste in music,” says Simon. “It’s definitely pulling from that heavy element of the psychedelic scene. [We’re] kind of a niche band, so it’s been a long road carving out a following. But I think it’s cool to get bands that all fit together in some way.”

For the fest, Hagen wanted to distribute talent as equally as possible across all of the stages, he says. Booking sought-after bands such as Seattle’s Rose Windows or Swedish act the Orange Revival was a must. “When [some local promoters] book these festivals, they’ll book one big band, and they’ll put a bunch of shit behind it, and they’re not paying any of these other bands,” Hagen says.

Is it novel to think a brand named Thief Presents would go the extra mile to pay all their acts? Perhaps. But for Hagen, the ethos of cultivating a premier psych-rock event is worth the financial hit. “I’m in this to blow people’s minds, straight up,” Hagen says. “I want you to come and just be like, ‘What the fuck?’ and engrave that in your brain... a moment in time you don’t forget.”

PSYCHO DE MAYO

featuring Black Mountain, A Place to Bury Strangers, Dead Meadow, Dead Skeletons and more at the Yost Theater, 307 N. Spurgeon St., Santa Ana, (888) 862-9573; www.yosttheater.com. Sun., 2 p.m. \$18 in advance; \$25 at the door. All ages. For more info on Psycho de Mayo, visit www.facebook.com/thiefpresents.

EXENE SAYS
» EXENE CERVENKA

DIY Till I Die

In 1976, Nancy Kaufman lent a friend money to rent a 125-square-foot store on the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Second Street in Santa Monica. The friend wanted to open a frozen-yogurt shop, but unfortunately for him, the building had no plumbing. He bailed, and since Kaufman now had a two-month lease on a space, she decided to open a clothing store. She named it Na Na.

At night, she worked at the Cinerama Dome. During the day, she made clothes to sell. Soon after, Na Na moved to Broadway, between Ocean and Second, after effectively taking over the whole block. It was the place where rockabilies, punks, mods, rude boys and New Wavers went to congregate. She sold Amish trousers, long underwear (in red, of course), Manic Panic hair dye and Mary Quant stockings from England.

After a long, successful run—including the addition of several shops in Hollywood, San Francisco and New York—Kaufman closed the Na Nas in 2001. Soon after, she opened her current cool shop, Brat Store, on 14th and Pico in Santa Monica. While such brick-and-mortar stores continue to disappear rapidly, it’s natural to wonder if a scrappy entrepreneur such as Kaufman can ever follow the same route in today’s world ruled by Amazon and iTunes.

If you aspire to start your own record store, hair salon, vintage store or punk-rock supply depot, I have great news: The odds are against you. So just go for it! What have you got to lose?

If an opportunity falls into your lap, grab it and run with it. A great store is always a place where the community congregates, and for many outcasts and underground bands in LA and OC, Na Na was exactly that. It was a really important component of the scene. Sometimes, that responsibility falls on a store owner; create a scene in a neighborhood that has none. You don’t have to get a space in the trendy or expensive areas. Most great clubs and stores begin in places that are considered poor, run-down, etc. But those are the most interesting and alive places!

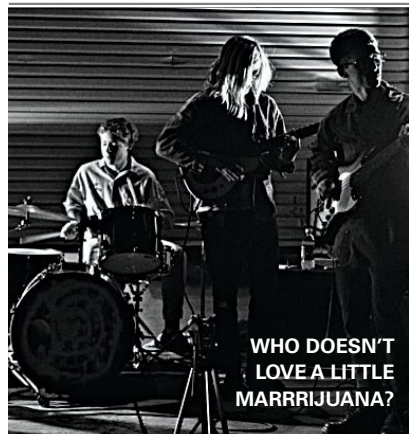
True to form, Brat is still a fountain of information on bands, clothes, art, events and people. Kaufman promotes shows, helps new bands, designs clothes, works a million hours a week, and is as excited and grateful as ever to be part of something meaningful.

Also: Connect with other stores and indie businesses. Why compete when you can help each other be stronger and more successful? Have a strong store identity. Let your freak flag fly!

Exene Cervenka is a writer, visual artist and punk-rock pioneer. The OC transplant is the lead singer for X, the Knitters and Original Sinners. Contact her via askexene@ocweekly.com.

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Potluck Progression

The Hindu Pirates' musical growth is a joint venture

BY DANIEL KOHN

If there's one thing the Hindu Pirates have learned during the rising tide of their rock & roll stardom, it's the value of teamwork. Especially when it comes to rolling a joint at a moment's notice. Sitting on the back patio of the Echo in Los Angeles, preparing to open for the Smith Westerns, their altruistic tendencies came in handy just minutes before soundcheck. One by one, they all chipped in a piece of the pot-smoking puzzle—first the papers, then the green, followed by some nimble-fingered rolling techniques. And in less than three minutes, their mission was accomplished.

Their demeanor was loose and relaxed, never wasting an opportunity to crack a joke or pick

on their own version of *Parks & Recreation's* Jerry Gergich, guitarist Giuseppe "Joey" LoBasso. But it's all in good fun, as the quintet have both a spoken and unspoken musical chemistry that creates a sound greater than the sum of their individual talents.

Formed in 2009 while the members were in high school, the Hindu Pirates have gradually earned the plaudits of local music critics and bloggers, one even labeling them "future stars" ahead of their successful stint at South By Southwest. Upon hearing this for the first time, the band couldn't hide their smiles.

"It's really cool to hear stuff like that," bassist Derek Bostleman says.

Guitarist Casey Snyder adds that those well-attended shows in Austin were the band's second time playing outside California.

Having known one another since their early days in the Huntington Beach/Costa Mesa area, there's a degree of controlled chaos that comes with being in this band. That came through loud and clear in previous recordings, including their 2010 debut full length, *Pelican Daze*, a fun, scrappy, surprisingly catchy effort they finished tracking in a mere eight hours. Wide-eyed, youthful exuberance certainly helps, but it's the synergy between the five band members that separates this group from other emerging rock bands. Though they're known for blending garage and surf rock, the guys don't want to be pigeonholed.

"We're not really surf punk anymore," Snyder says. "We're moving more toward indie, psychedelic, alternative rock. We can be labeled a thousand different ways, and we're still a bit garage-y."

"Our sound is getting bigger," singer Austin Ferreira adds. "When we started, we hardly knew how to play, so what we were playing was what we could play. Now, we're learning how to play new stuff, which we're going to do until we can't learn anymore."

In recent months, they've raised their profile considerably, securing a prime slot on March's Burgerama festival lineup (which they say was a thrill because they got to be on the same bill as Ariel Pink), plus a full schedule of shows and other promotions that should introduce them to a wider audience. Following a few gigs with Matt Costa, Hindu Pirates will be playing a June residency at the Echo; during that same month, the band will release "In The Dark" as part of a split seven-inch single with Rainbow Jackson via Near Mess Records.

After we talk for about 20 minutes, it's time for them to light up the coveted joint. But just as fast as they've rolled it, their manager comes outside and signals it's time for soundcheck. The Hindu Pirates' reaction is akin to that of a kid who has been called in by his parent to do his homework. They don't mind too much, however. They know that on this night, lighting up the crowd takes precedence over sparking up another joint. Sometimes, it takes a little maturity to set a pirate's priorities straight.

THE HINDU PIRATES

perform with Matt Costa at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com. Sat., 8 p.m. \$15. All ages. For more info on Hindu Pirates, visit www.facebook.com/hindupirates.

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Considered a revered epicenter of fine art, the well-to-do city of Laguna Beach isn't known as a bastion of new music discovery (unless you're looking for surf rock or reggae à la Sublime). Grant Owens—a disc jockey at member-supported KX-FM 93.5—is trying to change that. For the past six months, he has faithfully flipped on his studio mic every Friday at 9 p.m. to host the recently expanded show *We Found New Music*. The concept of the now-two-hour show is as simple as its name: During each episode, Owens plays the newest releases and features live sets from subterranean indie, pop and electronic gems just begging to be discovered.

After years of recommending bands and cobbling together mixtapes for friends, Owens decided to showcase the artists he loves by hosting his own radio show. He began broadcasting via Echo Park-based Intraffikradio in 2011. In November, he brought his show to Orange County and the newly launched KX-FM. The unique geography of Laguna Beach makes it difficult for listeners to clearly hear stations based out of Los Angeles or San Diego. The community radio station—led by program director, founder and morning show host Tyler Russell—fills that gap. It spins tunes from a “generational alt-rock” format, spanning from the 1960s to today. Artists know that they can come into the Laguna Beach studio to promote a new album, local show or national tour.

We Found New Music is becoming a sort of rising star among the others broadcast on the station, mostly because, for once, the local music community has a real outlet

through which to get their tracks to the masses (well, at least the quasi-masses). Owens, whose passion for music began at a young age, dreamed of becoming an opera singer while growing up in Laguna Beach. In his junior year at Laguna Beach High School, he landed the lead role of Joe Hardy in the musical *Damn Yankees!* He went on to major in vocal performance at the University of Southern California, but he switched his focus to learning more about the industry itself. After a stint as an intern at Astralwerks Records, he now works in the international production division at Universal Music.

Each segment of *We Found New Music* features a “band of the week,” a recap of the week's new releases and music headlines, and a guide to the best concerts for Orange County and, yes, even Los Angeles-based listeners.

Owens' position at Universal Music gives him a direct link to bands and their management teams, enabling him to host such groups as indie folk-rocksters Yellow Red Sparks, Las Vegas-based Imagine Dragons and Canadian electropop band Bear Mountain. Australian electronic artist Pigeon will appear on a future episode.

Owens also oversees a Facebook group and website dedicated to the show. Listeners submit tracks from their favorite cutting-edge artists that the DJ sifts through, in addition to the large amount of new music that's released every week. This allows him to tailor his playlist to what his audience wants to hear.

While he is passionate about being a DJ, Owens' dream is to sing in a band of his own. In the meantime, he's not shy about recommending people check out a few of his inspirations, including buzzworthy British acts such as Alt-J and Disclosure, as well as upbeat indie popsters St. Lucia. The sudden rash of good aural taste coming out of Laguna Beach could provide the South County music scene with a major step forward.

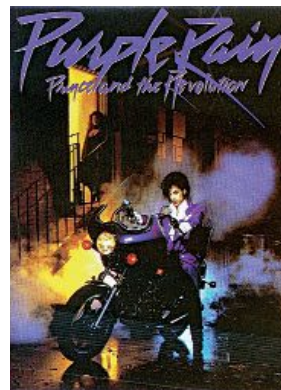
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5 TOP PRINCE SONGS

A SENSUAL, ESSENTIAL PLAYLIST OF THE PURPLE ONE'S GREATEST TRACKS BY KATRINA NATTRESS

Prince Rogers Nelson—a.k.a. Prince, a.k.a. The Artist Formerly Known As Prince, a.k.a. Prince—is coming back to OC after a nine-year absence. So what better way to honor the Purple One than to compile a list of his most immortal songs? His Royal Badness has produced 10 platinum albums and 30 Top 40 singles in his career, so there is a lot to choose from in his hefty catalog. After much consideration, we offer the following as Prince's top five songs.



5 "IF I WAS YOUR GIRLFRIEND," SIGN O' THE TIMES (1987)

This sultry track was released as the second single off Prince's lauded 1987 release. Though "If I Was Your Girlfriend" did not do so well on the pop charts due to confusion about the song's premise, it is a solid funk track. The sax breakdown at the end of the song is genius. And for those who may still not quite get the idea behind the song, Prince was singing to his then-girlfriend, Susannah Melvoin, about how he wished to have a closer relationship with her, like the one she had with her girlfriends.



4 "RASPBERRY BERET," AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY (1985)

"Sweet," is not usually a word used to describe Prince's songs, but it is fitting for this charming 1985 single. Adopting a Beatles-esque pop format, "Raspberry Beret" is simple and oddly sincere. Instead of groovy bass riffs and saxophone solos, this track features strumming acoustic guitars and violin. Though different from the sexy, funky tunes we all know and love, it's refreshing to see Prince revel in the process of falling in love.



3 "KISS," PARADE (1986)

Holding back the urge to dance when listening to this song is basically impossible. "Kiss," which Prince originally recorded as a short, 90-second-long acoustic demo, was meant for a group called Mazarati that was signed to his Paisley Park Records label. After giving the demo to his engineer, David "Z" Rivkind, who reworked the song into the funk masterpiece it is today, Prince quickly retracted his offer and took the song back. What a good call that was!



2 "PURPLE RAIN," PURPLE RAIN (1984)

Though Prince is the master of gyrating funk jams, he can also write an impressive ballad. Case in point: the title track to both his 1984 album and eponymous film's soundtrack. Prince's R&B influences shine in this epic slow jam as he bellows the lyrics with every ounce of his soul. It's rare for an eight-minute-long song to hold a listener's attention throughout, but between the swelling build-up, wailing guitar solo and crescendo of a finale, this is the definition of a masterpiece.

1 "WHEN DOVES CRY," PURPLE RAIN (1984)

It's no surprise that "When Doves Cry" was *Billboard* magazine's top-selling single of the year. Mysterious and moving, the track's minimalistic genius propelled not only the album's success, but the film's as well. I give that credit to the epic synth solo at the end of the nearly six-minute cut off the album.

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» TAYLOR HAMBY



Boozin' In Boring Brea

Good times are about to come to the Shady Nook

I've spent many a night at the Shady Nook just being nasty. I've hung out in the alley behind the bar, knocking back flasks of Wild Turkey bought at the neighboring liquor store. I've tucked small bottles of El Jimador into my purse to later shoot in the bathroom. Even my friend's parents get into the mix, smuggling in shooters of Jack Daniel and stealthily pouring them into the sodas they order.

Sorry, Jeff the Owner. We did this not because we're cheap (the Nook is incredibly affordable), but because it only sold beer, soju and a modest, no-thanks selection of wine. But my friends and I still went there because it brings actual workingman culture to Stepford Brea with karaoke, darts, *Big Buck Hunter*, an Internet jukebox, pool tables and tables from which we can watch the Ducks game. We'd wind up there after family Christmas festivities, after shows or just because there wasn't shit else to do in Brea that night.

But now, the Nook has a liquor license! I first heard murmurings of this momentous development around the beginning of the year, and it was finally true in late March. Time for a non-cheating visit! Since it was new to the alcohol game, I went in not really expecting the bartenders to have mastered the art of cocktails, considering they'd more or less just pulled tap handles or flicked open beer bottles for years. And I was right.

I decided to test the bartender with a peach martini. No offense to the lovely, crimson-haired Stacey, but it just didn't work: a dry, bitter mix of peach Absolut and vermouth. She was kind enough to try again, this time with a sweet vermouth that turned it into a semi-spicy concoc-

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tion—better, but I never would have guessed it was a peach martini. Stacey says the bar is attracting a younger crowd, and new faces are starting to come in, but she vows its lumpen ambience will remain. A signature cocktail list is imminent after

bartender training, but for now, I'd stick to straight shots and beer.

Some ups about the Nook: There's always a very friendly crowd. It offers more than just a pool table for entertainment, and you'll always see patrons doing more than staring into their drinks. Credit cards are accepted, and you can order pizza from next door and enjoy it right there in the bar.

Some downs about the Nook: There's a noticeable lack of cute guys and gals to look at. As it is right now, the crowd is a bunch of boring suburbanites—and Brea ranks just below Los Alamitos among the most boring people in OC (at least those Yorba Lindans bring *drama* wherever they go—and if you don't believe me, try Foxfire any night of the week).

But hey, I stumbled out of the Nook drunker than I ever had before—and I didn't even have to be a delinquent sneaking in booze this time.

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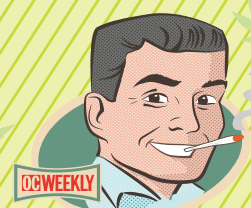
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BY ROB BREZSNY

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Are you afraid that you lack a crucial skill or aptitude? Do you have a goal that you're worried might be impossible to achieve because of this inadequacy? If so, now is a good time to make plans to fill in the gap. If you formulate such an intention, you will attract a benevolent push from the cosmos. Why spend another minute fretting about the consequences of your ignorance when you have more power than usual to correct that ignorance?

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Imagine you're in a large room full of costumes. It's like a masquerade store at Halloween plus a storage area where a theater troupe keeps the apparel its actors use to stage a wide variety of historical plays. You have free reign here. You can try on different masks and wigs and disguises and get-ups. You can envision yourself living in different eras as various characters. If you like, you can even go out into the world wearing your alternate identities. Try this exercise, Taurus. It'll stimulate good ideas about some new self-images you might want to play with in real life.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Ray LaMontagne sings these lyrics in his tune "Empty": "I looked my demons in the eyes. Laid bare my chest and said, 'Do your best to destroy me. I've been to hell and back so many times, I must admit you kind of bore me.'" I wouldn't be opposed to you delivering a message like that to your own demons, Gemini -- with one caveat: Leave out the "Do your best to destroy me" part. Simply peer into the glazed gaze of those shabby demons and say, "You bore me and I'm done with you. Bye-bye." And then walk away from them for good.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): I know a devotee of Tibetan Buddhism who got an unexpected message from her teacher. He told her she has made such exemplary progress in her quest for enlightenment that she has earned the ultimate reward. When she dies many years from now, the teacher said, she will enter nirvana! She will have no further karmic obligation to reincarnate into a new body in the future, and will be forever excused from the struggle of living in the material world. Although her teacher meant this to be good news, she was heartbroken. She *wants* to keep reincarnating. Her joyous passion is to help relieve the suffering of her fellow humans. Can you guess what sign she is? Yes: a Cancerian. Like her, many of you are flirting with an odd and challenging choice between selfishness and selflessness.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): A lawyer named John Keogh filed an application with the Australian Patent Office. It was for a "circular transportation facilitation device." His claim was approved. He thus became the owner of the world's first and only patent for the wheel. So far, he has not tried to collect royalties from anyone who's using wheels. I nominate him to be your role model, Leo. May he inspire you to stamp your personal mark on a universal archetype or put your unique spin on something everyone knows and loves.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): This may be the best week in a long time to practice the art of crazy wisdom. And what is crazy wisdom? Here's how novelist Tom Robbins described it to *Shambhala Sun*: It's "a philosophical worldview that recommends swimming against the tide, cheerfully seizing the short end of the stick, embracing insecurity, honoring paradox, courting the unexpected, celebrating the unfamiliar, shunning orthodoxy, volunteering for tasks nobody else wants or dares to do, and breaking taboos in order to destroy their power. It's the wisdom of those who turn the tables on despair by lampooning it, and who neither seek authority nor submit to it." And why should you do any of that weird stuff? Robbins: "To enlarge the soul, light up the brain, and liberate the spirit."

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "Why should we honor those that die upon the field of battle?" asked Irish poet William Butler Yeats. "A man may show as reckless a courage in entering into the abyss of himself." A woman may show similar bravery, of course. In my astrological opinion, that's the noble adventure beckoning to you, Libra: a dive into the depths of your inner workings. I hope that's the direction you go; I hope you don't take your stouthearted struggle out into the world around you. All the best action will be happening in that fertile hub known as your "soul."

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Historical records suggest that ancient Greek philosopher Democritus went blind late in his life. There are different stories about why. According to one account, he intentionally did it to himself by gazing too long into the sun. That was his perverse way of solving a vexing problem: It freed him from the torment of having to look upon gorgeous women who were no longer interested in or available to him because of his advanced age. I hope you won't do anything like that, Scorpio. In fact, I suggest you take the opposite approach: Keep your attention focused on things that stir your deep attraction, even if you think you can't have them for your own. Valuable lessons and unexpected rewards will emerge from such efforts.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Search your memory, Sagittarius, and recall a time when you pushed yourself to your limits as you labored over a task you cared about very much. At that time, you worked with extreme focus and intensity. You were rarely bored and never resentful about the enormous effort you had to expend. You loved throwing yourself into this test of willpower, which stretched your resourcefulness and compelled you to grow new capacities. What was that epic breakthrough in your past? Once you know, move on to your next exercise: Imagine a new assignment that fits this description, and make plans to bring it into your life in the near future.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Nairobi is Kenya's capital and home of over three million urbanites. A few minutes' drive from the city center, there's a 45-square-mile national park teeming with wildlife. Against a backdrop of skyscrapers, rhinos and giraffes graze. Lions and cheetahs pounce. Wildebeests roam and hyenas skulk. I suggest you borrow the spirit of that arrangement and invoke it in your own life. In other words, be highly civilized and smartly sophisticated part of the time; be wild and free the rest of the time. And be ready to go back and forth between the two modes with grace and ease.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): In the wild, a tiger's diet consists entirely of meat. The big cat loves to feast on deer and wild boar, and eats a variety of other animals, too. The hunt is always solitary, never done in collaborative groups. That's why the creature's success rate is so low. A tiger snags the prey it's seeking only about five percent of the time. It sometimes has to wait two weeks between meals. Nevertheless, a tiger rarely starves. When it gets what it's after, it can devour 75 pounds of food in one sitting. According to my astrological analysis, Aquarius, you're like a tiger these days. You haven't had a lot of lucky strikes lately, but I suspect you will soon hit the jackpot.

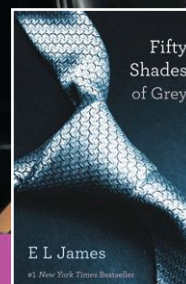
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): The French word *flaneur* is a meme that refers to a person who strolls around the city at a leisurely pace, exploring whatever captivates her imagination. To the casual observer, the *flaneur* may seem to be a lazy time-waster with nothing important to do. But she is in fact motivated by one of the noblest emotions -- pure curiosity -- and is engaged in a quest to attract novel experiences, arouse fresh insights, and seek new meaning. Sound fun? Well, congratulations, Pisces, because you have been selected as the Flaming *Flaneur* of the Zodiac for the next two weeks. Get out there and meander!

Homework: What's the single most important question you have to find an answer for in the next five years? Deliver your best guess to me at Freewillastrology.com.

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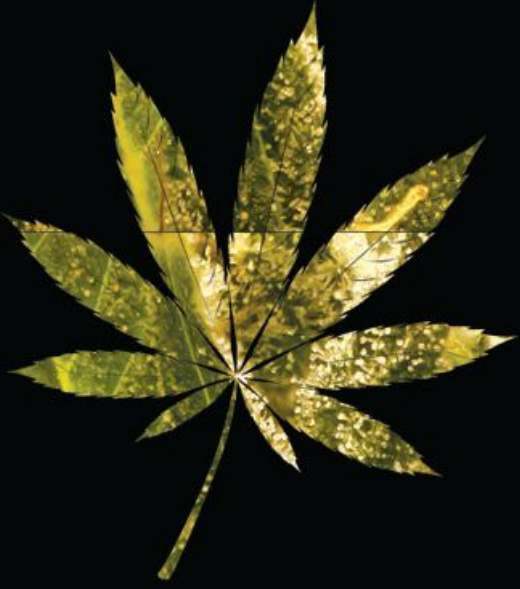
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Sunday, May 12th
10AM-4PM

Authentic Spanish Bistro & Tapas Bar • Café Sevilla



Centerfield
Sports Bar & Grill

HAPPY HOUR
EVERYDAY 3-7PM

LATE NIGHT HAPPY HOUR 9-11PM (Sun-Thurs)
\$1.95 bottles PBR & Miller High Life

50% OFF Lunch Specials

CINCO DE MAYO SPECIALS ALL DAY LONG on Sunday May 5th
\$2 Coronas
\$2 Margaritaville Tequila \$3.75
Carnitas Tacos with Chips & Salsa.

Visit Our Other Location
Red Fox Sports Bar in Cypress!

CINCO DE MAYO
\$2 Coronas
\$2 Tequilas
\$1 Tacos

HAPPY HOURS PRICES
TIL 7PM EVERYDAY
LATE NIGHT HAPPY HOUR
10PM - TIL MIDNIGHT
SUN - THUR.

\$2.95 Pints
\$3.50 Wells
\$4.50 Schooners
\$5.75 martinis

POOL LEAGUES | SOFT TIP DARTS & STEEL TIP DART LEAGUES FORMING! ASK THE BARTENDERS FOR DETAILS.

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WEDNESDAY
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MONDAY

\$4 GOOSE ISLAND 312 &
FEATURED SHOT (CHANGES WEEKLY)

TUESDAY

DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE IS THE WELL!

HAPPY HUMP DAY

\$3 WELL WEDNESDAYS
SCHOONERS FOR THE PRICE OF PINTS

THURSDAY

\$6.50 BUD LIGHT PITCHERS
FREE POOL

TGIF!!!

\$4.50 SAILOR JERRY
E-X-T-E-N-D-E-D HAPPY HOUR 3-8PM

KILL THE KEG SATURDAY

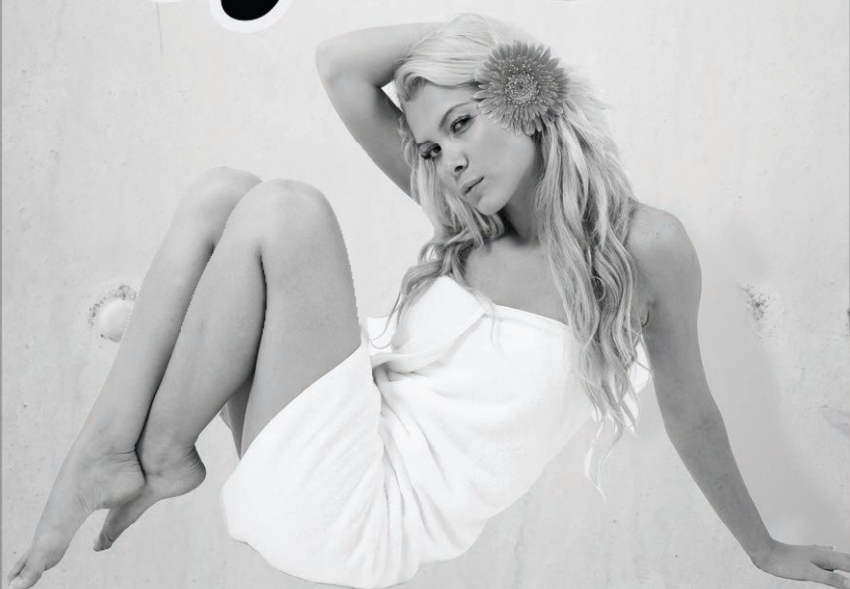
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NOON-?

*LUCKY CUSTOMER GETS AN EMPTY
PITCHER & GIFT CERTIFICATES!

SUNDAY

\$3 WELLS
\$8 DOMESTIC PITCHER

21+



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THE TOLDO SHOW

FILM NOIR SOUL, FEMME' FATALE CABARET

THURSDAYS 9:30PM
SHARP!



FRIDAY / MAY 3

HARLOW GOLD

A HIGH
ENERGY AND
UNPREDICTABLE
MODERN CABARET REVUE

ADVANCE TICKETS AT HARLOWGOLDSHOW.COM



SAT MAY 4 JAIL WEDDINGS

11PM

WITH OPENING ACTS:

10PM | DON JUAN Y LOS BLANCOS / THE BLOODHOUNDS | 9PM

SATURDAY MAY 11 EXPERIENCE PINK FLOYD LIVE

WHICH
ONE'S
PINK?

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ZONE 2





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FOR EVERY \$10 YOU SPEND, GET \$1 WGAC (LIMIT 5/DAY)



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\$10 Test Drive

Every Bed*- All Week \$10

OR

Any Regular Spray Tan \$10

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MAY DAY



**MAYWEATHER
VS GUERRERO**
WELTERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

PONCE DE LEON VS MARES
FEATHERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

FROM MGM GRAND, LAS VEGAS
SATURDAY, MAY 4, 9 PM ET / 6 PM PT
SEE IT HERE!

MAYWEATHER PROMOTIONS | GOLDEN BOY | MGM GRAND | FOX | SHOWTIME



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EVERYDAY 3-7PM

LATE NIGHT HAPPY HOUR 9-11PM (Sun-Thurs)
\$1.95 bottles PBR & Miller High Life

50% OFF Lunch Specials

CINCO DE MAYO SPECIALS
ALL DAY LONG on Sunday May 5th

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SUN - THUR

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\$4.50 Schooners
\$5.75 martinis

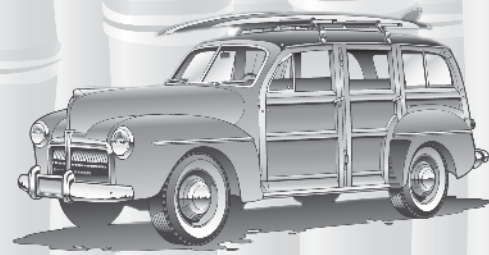
POOL LEAGUES | SOFT TIP DARTS & STEEL TIP DART LEAGUES FORMING! ASK THE BARTENDERS FOR DETAILS.

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"...their sushi chef kept me entertained, while he prepared the most happening sashimi on the fly"

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**Red Thai
ROOM**

BOOW

HAPPY HOUR MONDAY-FRIDAY 4PM-7PM



- \$5 Papa Nachos
(Carne Asada Fries)
- House Margaritas 2 for \$6
- 1/2 OFF Apps & More!

Come Join Us at
El Farolito Jr. of Fullerton
Sunday, May 5th ALL DAY

CINCO DE MAYO PARTY!

- Cantaritos \$5
- Mexican bottled beer \$3
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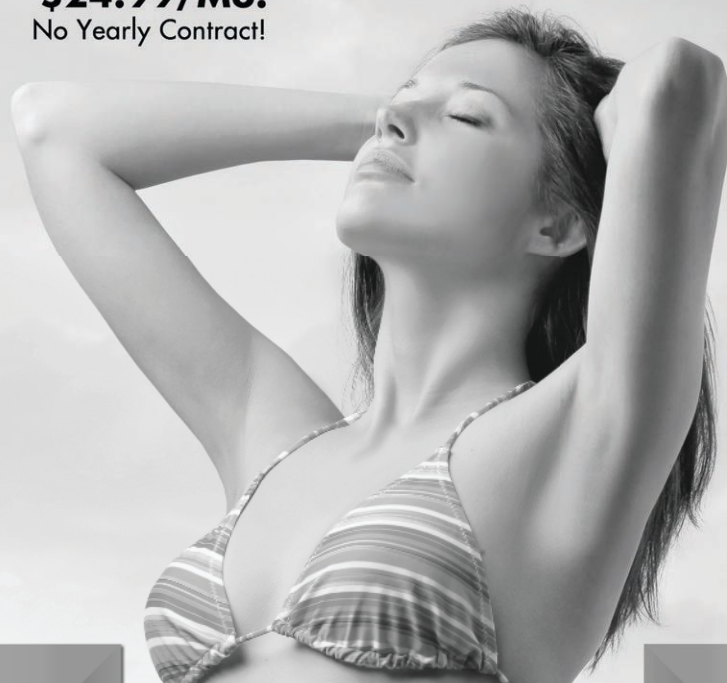
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ZONE 3



IRVINE LAKE CALIFORNIA CLASSIC

IRVINE LAKE – SILVERADO, CA



MAY
3-5
2013

**GENERAL
ADMISSION
TICKET:**

FRIDAY: **\$10**

SATURDAY: **\$20**

SUNDAY: **\$25**

3-DAY PASS: **\$50**

TEENS: **\$5 OFF**

12 & UNDER: **FREE
WITH PAID ADULT**

**GENERAL PARKING:
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THURSDAYS 9:30PM SHARP!



FRIDAY / MAY 3

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10PM | DON JUAN Y LOS BLANCOS / THE BLOODHOUNDS | 9PM

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SATURDAY MAY 4TH

MAY DAY



**MAYWEATHER
VS GUERRERO**
WELTERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

PONCE DE LEON VS MARES
FEATHERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

FROM MGM GRAND, LAS VEGAS
SATURDAY, MAY 4, 9 PM ET / 6 PM PT
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CINCO DE MAYO SPECIALS

**BRUNCH FROM 9AM-2PM
WITH MEXICAN BREAKFAST ITEMS
\$5 BLOODY MARYS | BLOODY MARIAS
\$12 FLOWING CHAMPAGNE**

HANS & JANINE DUO 1-4PM

DJ SIDE-C @ 6PM

TACO SPECIALS ALL DAY

GRAND MARNIER GIRLS 3:30-5:30PM

**PARTIDA GIRLS WITH
\$5 PARTIDA SILVER TEQUILA 1PM-3PM**

**AVION GIRLS WITH
\$5 AVION SILVER SHOTS 6-8PM**

\$7 CADILLAC MARGARITAS ALL DAY

\$3 PACIFICO DRAFTS ALL DAY

CORONA BUCKETS \$15 2-6PM



A Sports Bar for the Better Half

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

5/2 - OPEN MIC 8-11PM

5/5 - DJ SIDE-C

5/6 - OLIVIA ROHDE

5/7 - TACO TUESDAY & DJ SIDE-C

5/8 - ACOUSTIC JAMS & JT DOUGLAS

5/9 - SALT SHAKERS

5/10 - BO BICE

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**BILLY
GARDELL**
May 4

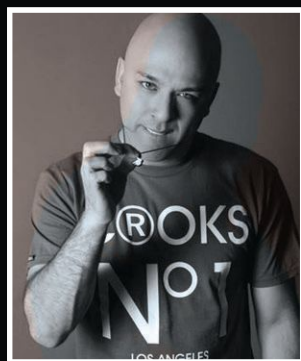


RALPHIE
MAY
May 9 - 12

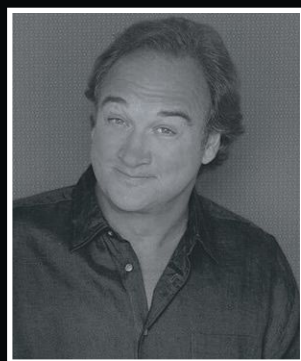


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JO KOY
MAY 2 - 4
MAY 9 - 11



**JIM
BELUSHI**
MAY 17 - 18



SATURDAY MAY 4th NO COVER CHARGE

CALL EARLY TO RESERVE YOUR TABLE
RESERVATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

MAY DAY

**MAYWEATHER
VS GUERRERO**
WELTERWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

PONCE DE LEON VS MARES
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MAYWEATHER PROMOTIONS | ENLIGHTENED | QWANT | BALLY | MGM GRAND | FOX PPV

#MayDay | #Guerrero | #PonceDeLeon | #Mares | #MGMGrand | #FoxPPV

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7 DAYS A WEEK 3PM-7PM

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\$4 well drinks



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OC WEEKLY

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